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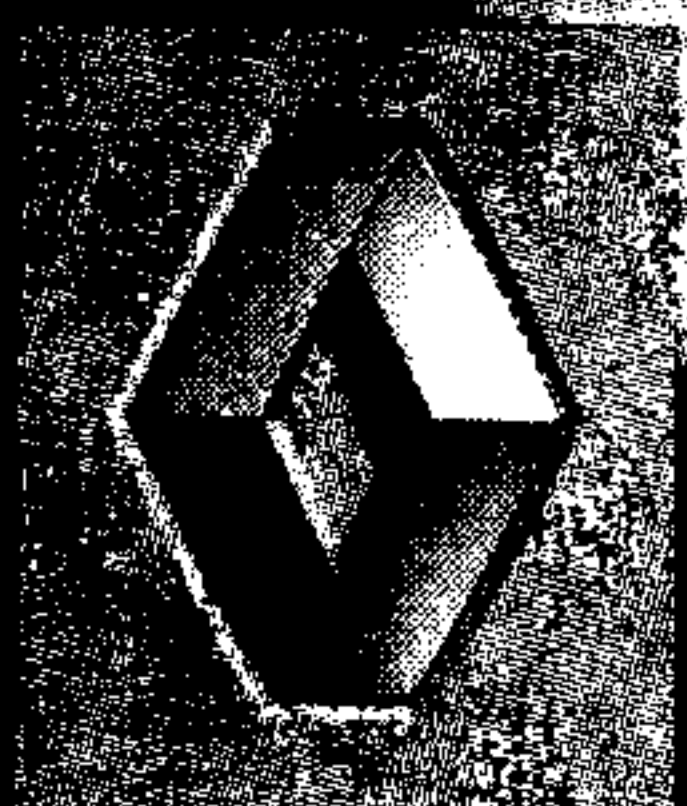
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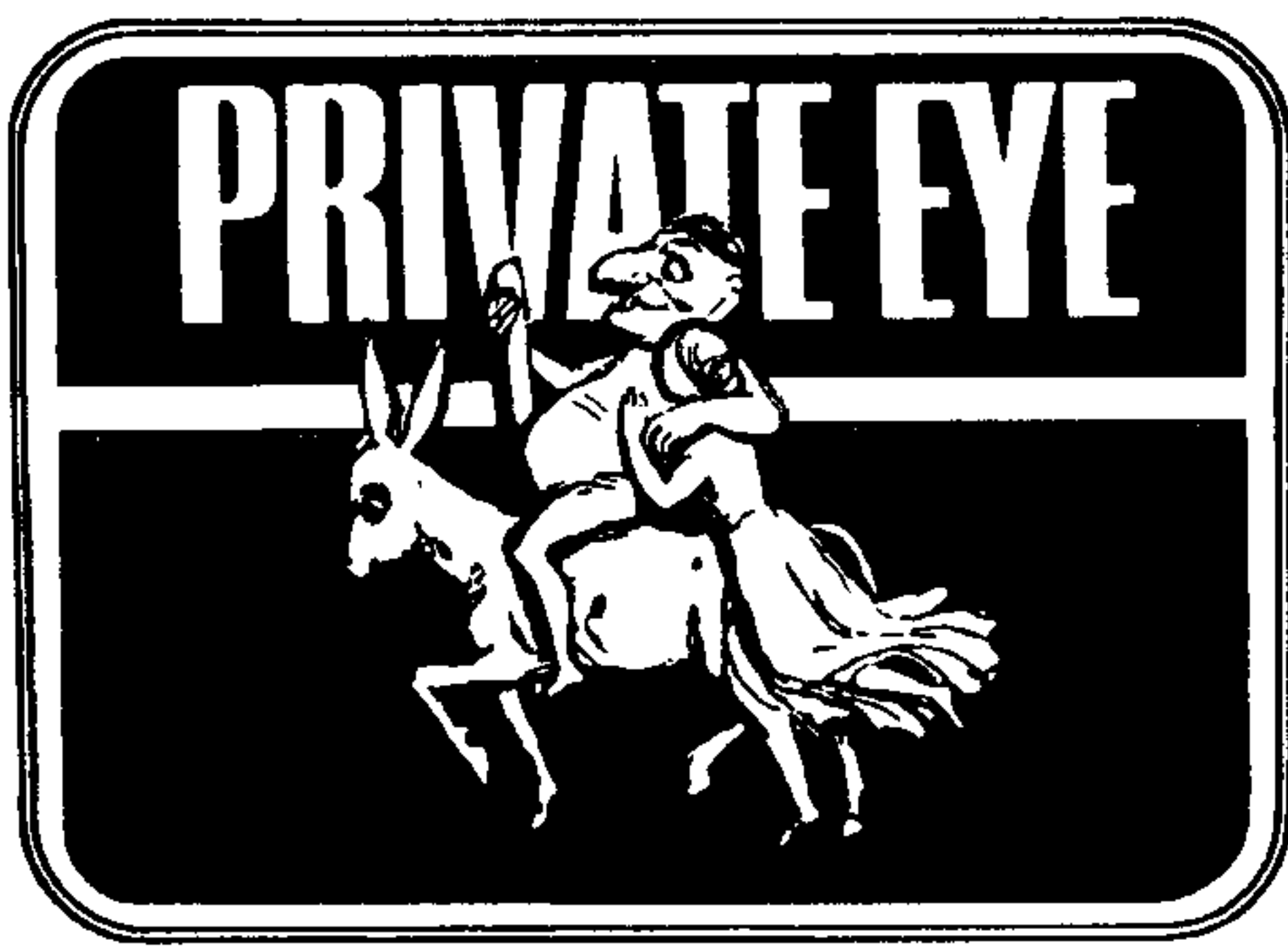
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"CHARLES: I'm interfering busybody" screamed a *Mail on Sunday* front page "exclusive" last week. It "revealed" how at the height of the foot and mouth crisis in April 2001, Prince Charles had "personally urged Tony Blair to perform a highly controversial political U-turn in the face of scientific advice" by switching government policy from mass-slaughter to vaccination.

For a very much more accurate account of what happened, the *MoS* might have consulted *Private Eye's* "Not The Foot and Mouth Report", published in October 2001. This explained how, in the closing days of March as the epidemic reached its height, "determined efforts had been made behind the scenes to bring the arguments for vaccination to Mr Blair's attention. The key moment came when Prince Charles sent him a paper by Dr Keith Sumption, a veterinary expert from Edinburgh University, condemning the mass-slaughter policy as ineffective and arguing strongly for emergency vaccination."

Far from Charles flying "in the face of scientific advice", he was pleading with Blair to listen to the scientists with genuine knowledge of foot and mouth. These veterinary experts, headed by two scientists of world rank, Professor Fred Brown and Dr Simon Barteling, were horrified by the way Maff's policy was being dictated by Professor Roy Anderson and his team of computer modellers, who had no experience of animal diseases whatever. In other words, in its determination to score a political point against Charles, the *MoS* got the story completely upside down.

● *Down on the Farm, p14*

LONDON mayor Ken Livingstone was challenging his suspension at the high court as the *Eye* went to press, so it remained to be seen whether he would be able to bring himself to draw upon the unedifying, but certainly instructive, case of Neville "fuck the Irish" Sanders whose two-year suspension from Peterborough council by the adjudication panel was halved by Mr Justice Wilkie last June.

The judge ruled that while Sanders comments about the Irish (which won him the *Eye's* bigot of the year award) breached the code of conduct, the people of Peterborough had re-elected him knowing about his behaviour. While Ken hasn't been up for election since the infamous Finegold incident, no Londoner could claim to have re-elected him thinking he was a polite man who always chooses his words carefully and soberly.

Meanwhile, much has been made of the facelessness of the three quangocrats whose decision left London mayorless. But the folk of East Riding (and regular readers of Rotten Boroughs) have good reason to remember one of them – Darryl Stephenson, the former chief exec of East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

This is the man who, in 1998, flogged off the council's listed 18th century offices at Lairgate Hall for a song to a formerly bankrupt second-hand car dealer with convictions for assault and drink driving. His 2002 pay rise of 34.5 percent to £140,000 – just as low-paid council workers pay claims were being rejected – caused fury. And when he retired last year, his lucrative post was taken over by pal Nigel Pearson, director of corporate resources. Pearson's job was, in turn, taken over by head of legal, Sue Lockwood... aka Mrs Darryl Stephenson.

PERHAPS the only man convinced by Multiplex's promises to have Wembley ready for the cup final – now moved to Cardiff – was Sports Minister Richard Caborn.

"They say the Cup Final will be there, barring six feet of snow or something like that," he told BBC Radio 5 in October. So far this winter has been one of the mildest on record. The fact that the already-extended deadline couldn't be met even without six feet of snow or the frozen ground that Multiplex lined up as its likeliest excuse, reveals just what a shambles the company's (mis)management of the project has been.

The price shot up from Multiplex's original £326m to the fixed price of £450m. With other costs taking the deal to nearer £800m, well above the price of other comparable national stadiums, tickets for events will be astronomically priced for years to come.

Meanwhile, in January Multiplex executives found time to attend the government's Business 2012 summit for firms looking to win... Olympic work!



"Are you quite sure, Gerald, that this is the best way to end the drought?"

Cheek by Jowell

- Family f***ing values at the Express 7
- Guantanamo Bay and our Man of Straw 8
- Foul! Adland goes to the World Cup 10
- 'Expert' witnesses; Bingo for Boeing; tax credit madness: In the Back 28, 29
- Slicker on the Mills tale 30, 31



"It could be time for a hosepipe ban, Arthur"

AMEC, the versatile engineering company, has formed an unholy alliance with Balfour Beatty in a bid to project manage the design and construction of Britain's Olympic infrastructure. But is this a good idea?

The last time the pair took on a major public project together was to build and run the University College London PFI hospital. It turned out more than double the price originally envisaged and is now contributing tens of millions of pounds a year to the hospital trust's ballooning deficit. With much of the Olympic development likely come under the private finance initiative, the government can't say it hasn't been warned.

Even scarier is Amec's attempt to muscle in on the nuclear game via another alliance, this time with the UK Atomic Energy Authority and the American firm CH2M to bid for work in the £2bn a year nuclear clean-up market. Amec boss Sir Peter Mason explained: "This alliance shows that the [government nuclear decommissioning authority's] mission of bringing private sector expertise and competition into the UK's civil nuclear market is working."

Glossing over the fact that it shows nothing of the sort (the consortium hasn't done anything yet), what does CH2M offer? According to its chief executive Ralph Peterson: "We bring to the alliance a track record of saving the US Department of Energy billions of dollars in safely decommissioning major US nuclear sites". Hmm. Last year the company was fined more than \$300,000 by the department for a series of violations at a nuclear storage site, including the exposure of workers to excessive radiation.

More worryingly, there doesn't seem to be much competition for the UKAEA's decommissioning work. As part of the alliance, Amec and CH2M have seconded staff to the government-owned UKAEA immediately.

WHILE other newspapers gave plenty of coverage to the latest news about Tessa Jowell and David Mills this Monday, the *Grauniad* buried it at the foot of page 6. But it did run a cartoon on the op-ed page portraying the culture secretary as a blameless victim.

One would expect nothing less. David Mills and *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger are good friends, regular dinner companions and occasional golfing partners, who both have weekend cottages in the same Gloucestershire village. And Tessa Jowell's best friend, whom she first met at Edinburgh University many years ago, is Lindsay Mackie – Rusbridger's wife.

Number
+ 22%
crunching

■ Rise in gas bills for Centrica customers last month

■ Rise in dividend payment to Centrica shareholders this year

EDITORIAL

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Street OF Shame

MARK BOLLAND's betrayal of Prince Charles came as no surprise to those who have long felt that the great spin doctor was, er, less than entirely trustworthy.

Bolland's account of his own life certainly can't be trusted. His CV as circulated to the press boasts that he graduated with a 2.1 degree in chemistry. *Who's Who* confines itself to "BSc Hons". Both are untrue: he graduated in 1987 with a mere pass, which meant he was unable to take up his milk-round job offer from Shell, which had required at least a third-class degree.

According to his *Who's Who* entry – written by Bolland himself – he began his career as a "public affairs executive, Public Affairs International Ltd, Toronto". Again, the truth is rather less grand. Thanks to York's regular exchange deal with York University, Toronto, Bolland spent 1985-86 studying in Canada. During the holidays he did a bit of summer temp work for a market research company – now transformed by Bolland, 20 years on, into a key executive role.

And so back to his first English job: "Marketing executive, IBM (UK) Ltd, 1987-88." Which is one way of putting it. Another, rather more accurate, would be to say that he spent a few months answering the phone at an IBM call-centre in Greenford, west London.

"It was a jobbing temp job," an ex-colleague recalls. "Nothing to do with marketing or 'executive' status. His role was answering simple technical queries on a helpline, of the 'what ink should I use with my printer?' type."

His big break came in 1988 when he got another temp job, at the Advertising Standards Authority, and was able to ingratiate himself with some big cheeses. Within nine years he was deputy private secretary to the heir to the throne. Did anyone bother to check his references?

CONGRATULATIONS, meanwhile, to Guy Black and Mark Bolland, who celebrated their marriage this month at Islington Town Hall, as announced in the *Daily Telegraph's* Court and Social column.

Guests at the ceremony included Black's *Telegraph* colleague Murdoch MacLennan. Their paper welcomed civil partnerships last December with the front-page headline "Gay Pride or Unholy Alliance?", over quotes from Stephen Green of Christian Voice describing homosexuality as an "abomination and vile affection, a sham and affront to almighty God".

Also mingling with the throng was *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre, whose paper welcomed the Civil Partnership Act by warning that "the likelihood is that it will undermine conventional marriage, add to stresses on family life and damage children."

Guest of honour, however, was *Sun* editor Rebekah Wade, who has in recent months been responsible for the headlines "Whobumit?" (on the identity of gay footballers), "Another One Bites the Pillow" (on the outing of Simon Hughes) "Big Bender" and "It All Ends on a Bum Note" on the first day of civil partnerships, and of course, "Elton takes David Up The Aisle". With gags like that, Bolland and Black must be kicking themselves they didn't ask her to make a speech!

JOHN WITHEROW, largely anonymous editor of the weekend's most ponderous read, the *Funday Times*, threw his toys out of his pram when he heard that veteran media commentator Bill Hagerty was being proposed as a judge for this year's appalling British Press Awards.

Still bruised by criticism of his paper

written by Hagerty several years ago, Witherow used the Press Awards editors' forum – convened to demand changes of organisers *Press Gazette* after drunken and yobbish outrages wrecked last year's event – to blackball the editor of the *British Journalism Review*. Other members of the forum, now pompously renamed the Grand Jury, pointed out that Hagerty could hardly sway the poll to elect the Newspaper of the Year as a panel of more than 100 judges, now pompously called the Academy, would be casting votes.

But Witherow wouldn't budge, which may turn out to be a bit shortsighted: Hagerty is on the judging panel of both the *What the Papers Say* and London Press Club Awards. Meanwhile, the Hagerty-free panel of judges at the British press awards has now produced its shortlist for newspaper of the year – and the *Sunday Times* isn't on it.

***TIMES* columnist Libby Purves gave short shrift to the prophets of doom on 21 February.**

"I can't remember a time when we were more vigorously urged to squawk in alarm on a daily basis... When we take a short break from fretting that a virus might mutate into another different virus, which doesn't yet exist, but which might, if it did exist, cause a pandemic of incurable flu, we are invited to consider the Greenland ice sheet. This is melting much faster than anybody thought and will soon drown us, not to mention the polar bears... global warming, terrorism, bird flu – you can fret and make yourself ill if you want, but leave me out."

Just six pages later, the *Times* carried the following reassuring headline: "Deadly Viruses Mutating to Infect Humans at Rate Never Seen Before".

HOW THEY ARE RELATED

WHEN seeking teenage pundits, editors never have to look far. Their Voices of Yoof in recent years have included the offspring of Peter Stothard, Alan Rusbridger, John Pilger, Vicki Woods and several other Street of Shame veterans.

The *Times* is nobly upholding the tradition with its latest columnist, who appeared two weeks ago just across the page from Giles Coren, himself the son of *Times* columnist Alan. The new pundit, Rose Heiney, was billed simply as "a student at University College, Oxford". By a remarkable coincidence, however, she is also the daughter of *Times* columnist Libby Purves.

THE Tonbridge robbery saw Fleet Street's finest taking fake-geezerishness to almost Guy Ritchie levels.

The several double-page spreads the *Sun* devoted to the story were emblazoned with the strap-line "The Tonbridge Job: Britain's Biggest Blag". For the *Mirror* it was the "Heist of the Century". The *Star*, despite the absence of minis, Noel Coward or anything remotely Italian, defiantly termed it the "£50m Real Italian Job."

"Men willing to take the risk of 'crossing the pavement' with a gun to lay their hands on huge sums of cash – occupy an elevated place in the pantheon of criminality," mused John Steele in the *Daily Telegraph* on Thursday.

His colleague Leo McKinstry was even more misty-eyed, comparing the Tonbridge raid to the BBC drama *Life On Mars*, in that it "evokes a spirit of nostalgia for an era before the advent of the human rights culture, when the police did not show too much sensitivity towards the criminal classes and coppers were more concerned about nicking offenders than celebrating multicultural diversity."

Over at the *Independent*, Matthew Norman confessed to "a frisson of guilty pleasure" at the news. "There is enough of an Ealing Comedy flavour to suspect the involvement of Alec Guinness, and to wonder whether a place in the gang was found, possibly as 'wheels', for the late Alfie Bass," he chortled. His former firm the *Guardian* devoted two pages to its own pet jailbird Erwin James to explain why those



responsible were the "Kings of Crime" who would be treated in prison as "the aristocrats of the underworld".

Last word must go to one of the few geezers who actually encountered this bunch of cheeky chappies: bank manager Colin Dixon. "The terror of what happened and the horror of what might have happened is with us in every waking moment. For the criminals to use me is bad enough but to kidnap my wife and child and put guns against their heads and threaten them with death is something so frightening that words cannot convey them today." Cor blimey!

***SUN* showbusiness columnist Victoria Newton had a hot scoop on 17 February – "Brit winners Coldplay have assured their fans they AREN'T splitting up – despite reports claiming they are."**

And where did these mysterious reports (which apparently "sparked panic" among fans) appear? Er, in the previous day's Victoria Newton column in the *Sun*, which led its "All the Brit Hits of 2006" special with the headline "COLDPLAY 'SPLIT'".

THE *Liverpool Daily Post* is trumpeting its £2m sponsorship of the Liverpool European Capital of Culture – but in the paper's offices, the news has raised groans not cheers.

As the *Eye* has reported, the regional paper's own commitment to culture is distinctly shaky. The *Post* has reduced its arts supplement to a paltry eight pages, the daily arts diary now runs just twice a week and a new decree means that only five arts reviews are allowed in the main paper each week. So not a lot of room for the Capital of Culture's many offerings.

The £2m sponsorship comes at a time of stringent cutbacks at the paper with redundancies galore and a moratorium on office parties.

NOTORIOUSLY volatile *Mirror* hack Don Mackay has been persuaded to attend an anger management course. Its conclusion? The boorish Scot wouldn't get so angry if only he didn't drink so much.

It was Mackay who, after collecting a prize on behalf of his colleagues at the British press awards a few years ago, managed to smash the cut-glass trophy before the evening was through. Later that same night Inspector Knacker was called after Mackay had a lively "discussion" with an ex-colleague, and a *Mirror* sub who tried to interpose himself between the combatants got a bloody nose.

Eye readers may also recall Mackay's heroic record in the Kosovo conflict of 1999. He spent much of the war at the Hotel International in Skopje, yelling at native Macedonians: "Why can't you speak fucking English?" When he reached Pristina his behaviour was so offensive that a *Mirror* photographer tried to strangle him. His colleague Harry Arnold rang the newsdesk to warn that Mackay was "totally out of control". Fearful that he might single-handedly start another Balkan war, the *Mirror* recalled him to London.

OSCARS – or at the very least Baftas – are surely due to the British hacks who battled so heroically to unveil the new Bond girl who would play *femme fatale* Vesper Lynd alongside Daniel Craig's 007 in the forthcoming *Casino Royale*.

First out of the blocks was the *Daily Mirror*, whose New York correspondent Ryan Parry delivered a sensational "exclusive" on 5 December last year: "Oscar-winner Charlize Theron is being lined up as 007's latest lovely, the *Mirror* can reveal." Theron and Daniel Craig "are due to start filming in Prague next month".

On 1 January, Louisa Pritchard informed *Mail on Sunday* readers that Craig was actually urging producers to cast Sienna Miller in the film. Ten days later, *Sun* hack Matt Bendoris set the record straight: "VELVET BEAUTY TO BE NEW 007 TEMPTRESS." Raunchy Rachael Stirling, who shot to fame in the TV drama *Tipping the Velvet*, "is set to follow her mum Dame Diana Rigg and become a Bond girl".

On 15 January, *Sunday Mirror* showbiz editor Ben Todd exclusively revealed that the part had gone to Thandie Newton. "Movie chiefs were 'blown away' by screen tests in which Thandie, 32, shared a bed with new 007 Daniel Craig."

On the same day, the *Mail on Sunday*'s James Tapper had a similar story: "She is set to be unveiled as the next Bond girl after auditions last week for the new film version of *Casino Royale*... According to insiders, director Martin Campbell and longtime Bond producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson are expected to confirm her in the role on Friday." Only one small difference: according to Tapper's "insiders", the actress in question was not Thandie Newton at all but Rose Byrne, who played opposite Brad Pitt in *Troy*.

Iain Burchell confirmed the news in the *Daily Star* the next morning. "Stunning Rose Byrne, 26, has landed the coveted role of Vesper Lynd in *Casino Royale*, according to Hollywood insiders."

Or not, as the case may be. "The name's Newton – Thandie Newton – and we can reveal the sexy actress is the new Bond babe," Grant Rollings reported in the *Sun* on 26 January. "She will star opposite Daniel Craig in *Casino Royale*, James Bond's 21st big screen venture."

This prompted a 1,600-word profile of Newton from the *Express*'s Katie Fraser. "This week it was announced that she is to star opposite Daniel Craig in *Casino Royale*," she wrote, omitting to mention that the "announcement" had merely come from another tabloid.

Two weeks ago, the makers of *Casino Royale* duly announced that Vesper Lynd is to be played by... French actress Eva Green.

LUVVIES

What Newton has learnt from Lorena [her cleaner] is never-ending: "About life, she has taught me resilience; about love, that it doesn't need words; about cleaning, so much! She does these fancy corners on our sheets. And the way she stacks towels makes me moist."

THANDIE NEWTON
Sunday Times 'Style' Magazine

Submitted by Simon Atkinson.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

YAHOO HA

RED faces all round at Yahoo Mail, after the company's attempts to avoid offending Muslim sensibilities backfired.

Yahoo decided it would be a good idea to ban all user names that included the word "Allah", but has been forced to rethink this policy after an Ashfield, Massachusetts resident named Linda Callahan found her chosen user name was rejected.

Her son has been widely quoted on various

HACKWATCH

Daily Express

DAILY EXPRESS editor Peter "Mentally" Hill and owner Richard Desmond have been explaining their new marketing campaign. "We know what we stand for," Desmond informed the *Observer*, while Hill told the *Independent*: "It's been a long process to try to make the *Daily Express* into a newspaper that really does have a firm, and good, set of beliefs that people are aware of."

Both are particularly proud of their current TV commercials in which the few remaining *Express* readers under 50 are brought together to declare what they and their newspaper stand for. Lord Gnome is happy to offer a few illustrations of how those values are put into practice by Dirty Des's mighty empire:

"We stand for traditional values." Values like honesty and trust, exemplified by Desmond's managing director Stan Myerson. As deputy advertising director of the *Express* under a previous owner in the 1990s, he hired a private detective to spy on his boss, who was having an extra-marital affair. He then blackmailed the boss into resigning, saying that otherwise he'd send the evidence to his wife. Myerson, who duly took his job, was himself having an affair – and both he and his mistress pocketed vast amounts in fraudulent expenses and bonuses. He was sacked in 1994 for "gross misconduct", only to be brought back when Dirty Des bought the paper. Andrew Cameron, the former MD of *Express Newspapers*, described Myerson in his memoirs as "the most distasteful and unpleasant man I met in all my newspaper years".

"We stand for law and order." Two senior *Express* staff have been jailed in the last couple of years – one for child-sex offences, the other for savagely attacking a man in a bar. And a recent court case in New York revived memories of Dirty Des's past dealings with New York mafioso Richard Martino and porn ad-man Norman

Chanes, both of whom confessed to running an internet porn scam worth \$650m. Martino is now serving a nine-year sentence for racketeering.

"We stand for good manners." Indeed we do. Who could forget the meeting with *Telegraph* bosses two years ago to discuss joint printing arrangements, at which Desmond gave a master-class in polite etiquette? He called the *Torygraph* representatives "crooks", "fucking wankers" and "fucking cunts", and addressed chief executive Jeremy Deedes as "you miserable little piece of shit". Referring to rumours that the *Telegraph* might be sold to a German company, Desmond goose-stepped up and down the room making Nazi salutes before ordering his henchmen to sing "Deutschland über Alles".

"We don't stand for freeloaders." Last year Desmond paid himself a salary of £51.74m – a million quid a week – while slashing hacks' expenses and emptying their pension fund. (The *Express* pension fund is now more than £72m in deficit.) Yet he still has an eye for a freebie. Before last Christmas the *Daily Star* lured readers with a promise that "Ten Xbox 360s Must Be Won" – but in fact there were only nine to give away, the tenth having already been snaffled by Dirty Des for his teenage son!

"We don't stand for yobs." Only last August the *Express* had to pay a six-figure sum to settle the legal action brought by its former executive editor Ted Young, a victim of appalling yobbishness. Displeased at the *Express*'s failure to run an obituary of a forgotten 1960s pop singer, Desmond had taken a swing at Young's head, which failed to connect. Then he thumped him in the stomach.

"We stand for good, clean fun." As proved by the fare on Desmond's TelevisionX satellite channels, which are currently offering a "fuck-frenzy season". Desmond's idea of good clean fun apparently includes *Anal Addicts*, *Anal Angels*, *Hot Hole Honeys*, *Cum on My Great Big Tits*, *Cum Swallowing Babes*, *Filipino Sucky Fuck*, *Docklands Road Trip* ("fisting, fucking and jugs galore") and that perennial family favourite *Layla Jade: Spunk Sucking Slut*.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Sussex Arts Club. Who goes there: Radio 4's Michael Crick and Simon Fanshawe... Actors from *Bad Girls*, Gaz from Supergrass, Alan Bates (below) and Brighton's raffish set. Julie Burchill..."

– Peter York's "insider's guide" to "medialand" clubs, *Independent*, 20 February 2006.

"Sir Alan Bates, one of the most renowned and respected actors of his generation, has died from cancer of the liver at the age of 69."

– *Independent*, 29 December 2003.

websites as saying: "She was disgusted [by Yahoo's policy] and saddened. It was discriminatory. They disallowed 'allah' but allowed 'jesus' and 'god,' and I don't think there is a rational explanation for that."

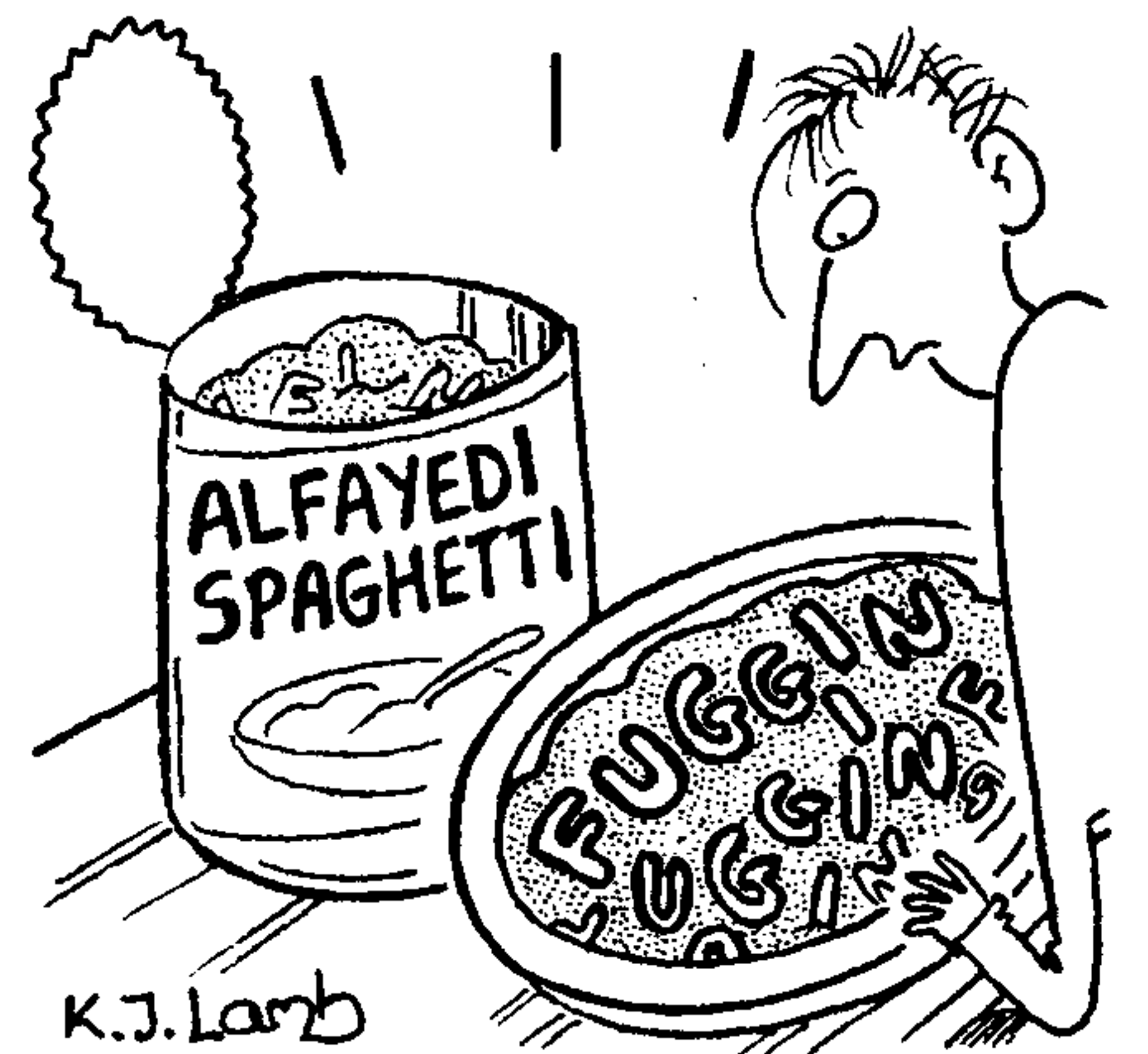
All of which is reminiscent of the AOL "Scunthorpe" cock-up in 1996, when residents of that town were unable to sign up to the internet provider because of an over-zealous application of their "obscene language" filter. Yahoo has now removed the "allah" restriction.

WORLD OF SPORT

"BUSY" Roger Draper (see last *Eye*) has left his former colleagues at Sport England breathless at his audacious move to the Lawn Tennis Association.

Draper had been at Sport England for just four years, during which time he handed over control for the English Institute of Sport to another quango, UK Sport; cut the staff at the London HQ by half; and then handed over most of his organisation's responsibilities for doling out lottery cash.

But not, significantly, before he was able to



oversee a £16.5m grant of public money being made to... the Lawn Tennis Association.

The LTA is already awash with cash from the proceeds from Wimbledon, while having the reputation of never actually managing to produce a world-class tennis player. (Henman and Murray were both developed outside the LTA "system", while Rusedski is Canadian.) Even Draper warned tennis that it was "running out of excuses" for not producing champions. Then he presided over the £16.5m grant.

Not surprising, then, that questions are being asked about how Draper managed to get a LTA chief executive's job that was never advertised – as is required of all government-funded sports organisations.

Draper starts his new job on 1 April, the day after the last tranche of 40 Sport England employees receive their redundancy cheques.



TONY BLAIR has brought yet another management consultant to the centre of power – Gill Rider, who joins the Cabinet Office as “Director General, Leadership and People Strategy”. But what will she bring to the job?

As “Chief Leadership Officer” with Accenture, the management consultancy formerly known as Accenture, where Rider worked with the blessed Enron. Accenture was formerly Andersen Consulting, the sister firm of the Andersen accountancy outfit which collapsed after Enron, implicated in the financial frauds.

Andersen Consulting always insisted this was nothing to do with it and changed its name to Accenture to underline its separation from Andersen. However, as head of energy at the management consultancy, Rider regularly talked up Enron’s role in “liberalising” energy trading across Europe. In 1999 the two firms issued a joint press statement headed “Enron & Andersen join forces to offer energy trading solutions to European market”. Rider and Enron’s European boss John Sheriff promised they would work together to bring Enron’s “energy trading and risk management” systems to other businesses.

Private Eye asked the Cabinet Office if Rider’s work with Enron had been an issue at her interview. A spokesperson said: “We will not discuss what was said at her interview.”

HEALTH Secretary Patricia Hewitt announced a “new report” on independent sector treatment centres (ISTCs) to coincide with Tony Blair’s high-profile meeting at Number Ten with private health firms who are bidding for NHS work.

Her press release celebrated the way the report shows that privately-run NHS clinics help the NHS with productivity, efficiency, choice and many other wonderful things. But not once did she say who wrote this glowing evaluation of her privatisation drive.

Private Eye tracked down the mystery report and discovered that it was the work of Ken Anderson, who is, er, the Department of Health official in charge of the ISTC programme. Anderson, a Texan who was hired by the NHS from a privatisation specialist to contract out NHS work, is – not surprisingly – enthusiastic about his own programme. Well done, everyone!

“We turn the brewery into a self-governing trust, and they’ll organise the piss-up!”



MAN OF STRAW

WHEN Foreign Secretary Jack Straw set out to apologise for Guantanamo Bay on Radio 4’s *Today* programme, some of his claims were at odds with the facts.

“I’m absolutely clear that the US has no intention of maintaining a gulag in Guantanamo Bay,” he said. Oh no? When a reporter from Voice of America – hardly a subversive source – visited the detention centre in Cuba earlier this month, he saw considerable new building work. Specifically, next to Camp Five, which already houses detainees, he saw cranes, concrete and workmen busily constructing more substantial cells at a new Camp Six.

Straw argued that though conditions were not satisfactory when Guantanamo Bay was first established as a camp, “conditions have significantly improved since then”. He implied that this was the conclusion of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The evidence does not support this.

The Red Cross keeps its discussions with the US government confidential, but one of its reports was leaked to the *New York Times* and showed that conditions actually *worsened* in 2004, two years after the camp was opened. The Red Cross said interrogation methods were increasingly “more refined and repressive” and identified “humiliating acts, solitary confinement, temperature extremes, use of forced positions”. Some beatings were “tantamount to torture”.

Frustration with the lack of intelligence produced from prisoners at Guantanamo may have been behind the worsening conditions in 2004. While Straw may have seen evidence of improvements after 2004, the recent hunger strike suggests inmates do not share that belief. The hunger strike was broken by force-feeding inmates strapped in “restraint chairs”.

Straw also emphasised that the US had “picked up a lot of people who are very very dangerous” and held “some hundreds of very bad terrorists” at the camp. In fact the exact nature of the inmates is hard to determine given that the US refuses to hold trials that meet international standards. Examination of documents that do exist tend to contradict

Straw’s assertions. American law professor Mark Denbaux, who also represents two Guantanamo detainees, analysed papers from 517 “Combatant Status Review Boards” – the US military hearings at Guantanamo. He found that the US had directly arrested very few of the detainees – just 5 percent – while 86 percent were handed over by the Pakistani authorities or the Afghani Northern Alliance.

This is hardly satisfactory – as can be seen from the case of Afghan brothers Badr Zaman Badr and Abdurrahim Muslim Dost, imprisoned at Guantanamo on the word of a mullah called Sami Ullah. The brothers had annoyed Mullah Ullah by publishing a newspaper that made fun of religious leaders who preached jihad while making themselves rich. The brother’s satirical newspaper was informed by their love of the *Canterbury Tales* and *Gulliver’s Travels*. Unfortunately this annoyed local leaders and also led them to make a joke about Bill Clinton. When the former US president offered a \$5m reward for the capture of Osama Bin Laden, the brothers wrote that their country should put up a 5m Afghani reward for the capture of Bill Clinton. The joke was on the Afghan economy, as 5m Afghans were worth about \$100. However, spurred by the denunciation of local mullahs and with the Clinton joke as evidence of the brothers attempt to attack the US, they were held at Guantanamo for three years until they could convince interrogators this was satire. Luckily Badr speaks fluent English and was able to persuade the US to release them last October after three and a half years in captivity.

Professor Denbaux’s analysis shows that only a third of the detainees are linked to al Qaeda. Of this third, only 9 percent were called a “fighter for” al Qaeda, 34 percent were called a “member of” al Qaeda and 57 percent were only “associated with” al Qaeda. These could be Jack Straw’s “dangerous men”, but they could equally be subject to erroneous charges. Some of the evidence certainly seems questionable. A handful of detainees were identified as “enemy fighters” because they possessed “a Casio watch”. Proper trials could untangle this evidence, but Straw was careful not to embarrass the US by demanding such a thing.

THE chances of a third runway at Heathrow moved a step closer last month with the appointment of British Airways’ head of government and industry affairs (aka lobbying) to a top government job.

Andrew Cahn becomes chief executive of UK Trade and Investment, the arm of the Department of Trade and Industry responsible for promoting British business, from which lofty position he can expect his views to be taken seriously in the corridors of power.

Among the more controversial of Cahn’s opinions, expressed forcefully before the government’s 2004 transport white paper, is that new runways at Heathrow and Stansted could benefit the economy to the tune of £65bn. In the face of vociferous local and environmental opposition, the government is set to decide on the airport expansions later this year. The airline industry will be pleased to have its man on the inside.

recent treatment at Addenbrookes hospital in Cambridge which gives the lie to such nonsense.

Bitten on the hand by one of her cats last month, the lady drove to the hospital where she was told she could be admitted for debridement of the wound later the same day.

When she returned, rather than enduring the gauntlet of the hospital car park, she was allowed to leave her car outside the entrance. A friendly porter then parked it for her while she was whisked straight into theatre for the cleaning of her small but perfectly-formed puncture wound under general anaesthetic. She was then discharged.

Excellent service all round! Does anyone at the hospital wish to contact the *Eye* to give us more details of this exemplary treatment? Congratulations are surely in order to the hospital and its chairman, Lady Archer.

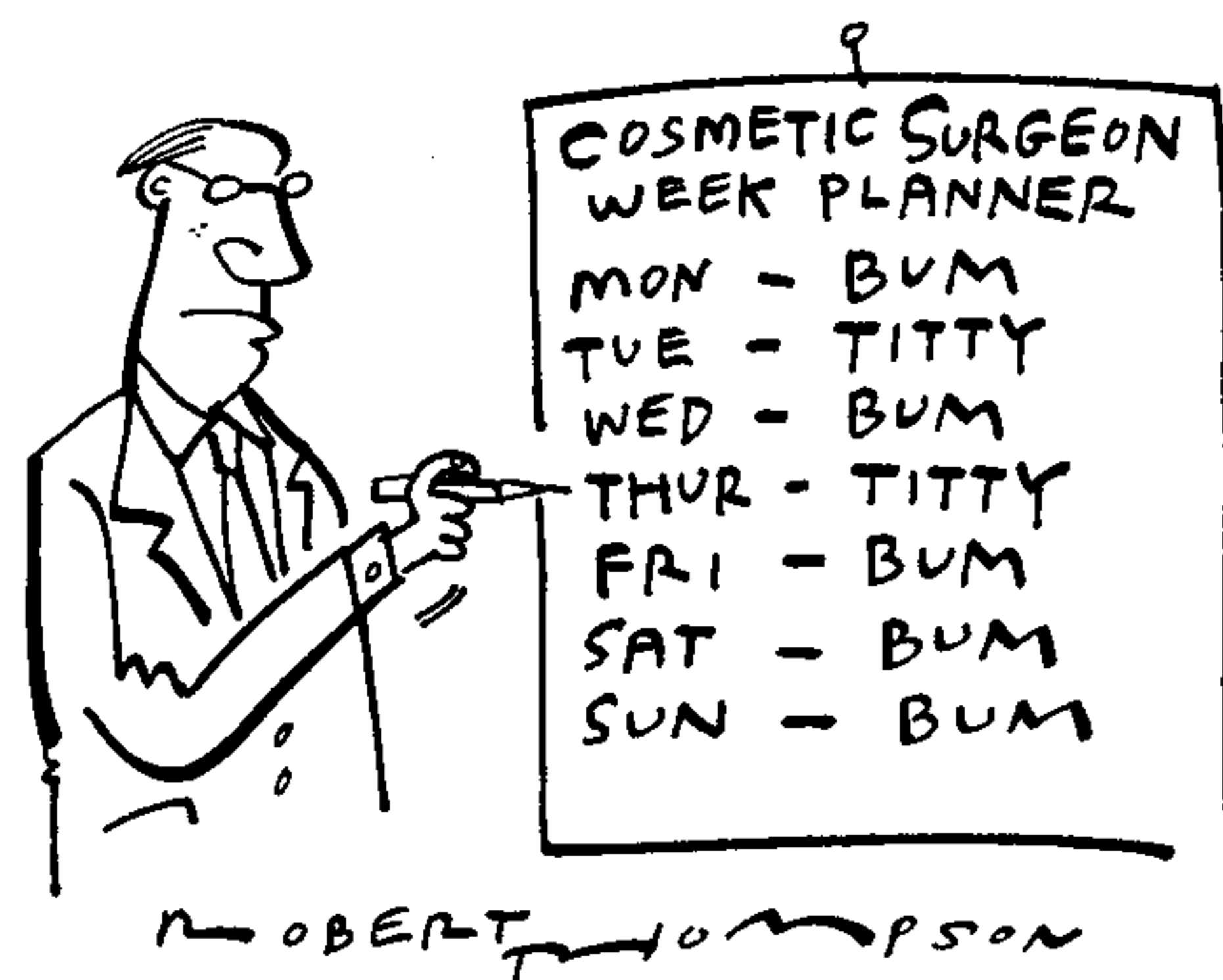
JUST FANCY THAT!

“... Ming Campbell with 19 votes, Chris Huhne with 18 and your man Simon Hughes in the rear.”

– Adam Boulton, Sky TV political editor, speaking to Lib Dem peer Lord Garden, 19 February.

CASUALTY CORNER

MUCH is written about the failings of NHS hospitals – long waits for appointments, delayed operations and so on, but the *Eye* has been told of one lady’s





"We could catch our death out here"

NEWS FROM THE SANDPIT

"THE Islamic Republic of Iran demands an immediate withdrawal of British forces from Basra." So pronounced Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki following a viewing of the Amarah beatings tape. In his judgment, the video demonstrated "a flagrant violation of human rights".

Violation of human rights is also a subject close to the heart of Mohammed al-Waeli, the governor of Basra, who called for a withdrawal of British troops from Basra two weeks before the *Screws* published the tape.

This time the human rights in question were those belonging to 15 men – including six senior Iraqi police officers – following their arrest on specific charges of involvement in torture and death squads acting on behalf of Islamist militias closely connected to Iran.

Al-Waeli has his own Iranian connections, meanwhile. He is a member of the Fadila party, which has been linked by various intelligence services to the Jameat – a group of senior Iraqi police officers who operate torture cells and murder squads on behalf of their own Iranian paymasters.

'Square Basher'

Legal News

NORBROOK Laboratories, multi-millionaire pharmaceuticals magnate Lord Ballyedmond's company, dropped its plans for a car park near playing fields in the Cumbrian village of Great Corby (see *Eye* 1152).

Great Corby residents who used an anonymously prepared objection letter to the council about the plans were contacted by Norbrook's lawyers, Cartmell Shepherd, threatening to take them to court if they did not withdraw the letters. After reporting this in the last issue, *Private Eye* has also received a letter from the litigious lord's own lawyers, Robert A Mullan & Son (partner: "The Lady Ballyedmond"), insisting that the Cartmell Shepherd letter had "only" demanded that the "defamatory statements" be withdrawn, not the objections to the plans.

As the prepared objection letters were all about traffic noise and safety, it's hard to work out which statements the residents were meant to withdraw. Anyway, Lord Ballyedmond's lawyers helpfully drew up another prepared letter for residents to send to the council saying (with no apparent sense of irony): "The statements in the pre-prepared document did not originate from me and I wish to withdraw those statements." There's nothing to identify which statements are withdrawn and nothing to say that the objection remains.

At least seven villagers did withdraw their objections. The *Eye* does not withdraw its objection to the use of libel threats as a bullying tactic in planning disputes.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

IN THE spirit of cosiness, back-scratching and the sweeping of dirt under taxpayer-funded carpets, the European parliament's budgetary control committee has decided not to penalize comrades in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) for past sins.

Instead, the committee has ignored its own dissenting members, led by the Swedish MEP Nils Lundgren, and will not now postpone approval of the CoR's 2004 accounts.

Lundgren, the budgetary committee's vice-chairman, had wanted various questions investigated. These concerned auditing of the vast amounts spent to restore the CoR's lavish building, and an unusual savings scheme that effectively allowed CoR staff to add to their salaries.

This is not the first time poor Lundgren has been thwarted. He was previously disappointed when trying to get a fair conclusion to a parliamentary resolution over the persecution of the CoR's former internal auditor, Robert McCoy (see *Eyes passim*), who made the mistake of exposing fraud involving bogus travel claims and has hardly worked since. In 2004 the European Parliament had called for formal apologies to be made to McCoy. But the apologies have been refused as "inappropriate". Two years on, McCoy remains at home "ill".

The budgetary control committee's latest decision on the CoR makes parliament look as self-serving and feeble as ever. Meanwhile the CoR goes from strength to strength: it now has a bigger budget (£40m, up from £17.5m before 2004) and, at 400, nearly double the staff. Business as usual, then.

THE European Investment Bank (EIB), the EU's "soft-lending" development bank, launched a £220m joint fund last month with the European Commission to subsidise low-interest loans for water, energy, transport and telecommunication projects in Africa.

Laudable as that might sound, many in the developing world have good reason to regard any more intervention by the EIB with horror given the impact of "infrastructure" – mines, oil pipelines, dams, etc – funded with EIB loans in the past.

The money itself doesn't actually go to the developing countries very often. A new study* commissioned by international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands has revealed that 90 percent of EIB development loans in Latin

America were in fact to big EU companies or transnationals, including Gas de France, Shell and British Gas.

The figures are similar in Africa and Asia; and MEPs, such as Italy's Luisa Morgantini, have pointed out that the EIB consistently flouts Europe's own development goals, investing in projects which are bad for the environment and for workers in developing countries.

In Indonesia PT Kekar Thames Airido, a subsidiary of the UK's Thames Water, was lent €45m to fund privatisation of Jakarta's water supply. Not only did the quality of drinking water get worse but the cost to poor householders increased.

German Volkswagen was given a €70m EIB loan for plant investment in Mexico, to build new Jetta A5s for the US market – meaning public "development" money was used to help a big, wealthy, EU-based company to exploit cheap Mexican labour.

Still, it's not just EU-based companies that benefit from EIB's "development" loans. In 2002 the EIB generously handed oodles of euros to the Canadian/Australian copper mining company First Quantum so it could become a major polluter (er, "invest in development" surely?) in Zambia.

EU-phemisms



France has Bird Flu, Britain had BSE

MYSTIC MOGG AWARD

ANYONE wishing to know what's really going on in Iraq – and who has £4,800 plus VAT to spare – should invest in a copy of Aegis Defence Services' 2006 Terrorism and Geopolitical Instability Report, which the company, one of the biggest private contractors in Iraq, published last week.

One of the report's chapters is entitled: "Ground Truth in Iraq: No Civil War". As managing director of research and intelligence Dominic Armstrong told Reuters last Thursday: "The situation there is not as bad as the media portrays and the country is not on the verge of civil war. The insurgency will continue but it will increasingly be down to criminals and foreign fighters as mainstream Iraqis become involved in the political process."

A mere two hours later police in Baghdad announced that at least 100 people had been killed in revenge for the bombing of the Shi'ite al-Askari shrine in Samara, while Sunni politicians refused to take part in an emergency summit called by president Jalal Talabani. Talabani took to the airwaves to plead with his people to "co-operate and work together against this fiercest danger because it threatens our unity and our country with a devastating civil war."

UNION NEWS

BNP leader Nick Griffin may be celebrating walking free from court on race hatred charges, but his party's efforts to start a trade union, calling itself Solidarity, have got off to a shaky start.

Solidarity denies that it is a BNP "front" organization, with former National Front man turned union boss Patrick Harrington angrily denying such suggestions in *The Independent*. The far right's top man in Wales, national treasurer John Walker, who was kicked out of the TGWU after standing in Euro elections for the BNP, was less on-message about the set-up however.

"There probably will be a political levy at some stage to the BNP just as other unions raise money for Labour," he said in an interview with *Wales on Sunday*. "It is quite possible and feasible that when Solidarity becomes fully functional, some element of funds raised will be donated to the BNP."

Solidarity will need to get its own funds in order before raising cash for Griffin's crowd. To register as a union it had to send Whitehall's certification officer a cheque for £150. The *Eye* hears that the first cheque bounced.

TIME TV

Just The Two Of Us (BBC1)
The Apprentice (BBC2)
The Apprentice – You're Fired! (BBC2)
The Real Dad's Army (C4)
The Real Rain Man (C5)

ONE of the worst moments of any television year is the segment on *Children in Need* when the BBC's news anchors prove what good sports and fun people they really are by getting together a rock band: Huw Edwards on vocals, Fiona Bruce playing bass, George Alagiah on keyboards, with backing vocals from Orla Guerin and Kate Adie and Jumpin' John Simpson on Moog.

But, in a BBC news empire obsessed with showing how human its autocue-readers are, this annual aberration has inevitably become an eight-part reality TV series. *Just The Two Of Us* is a pro-am crooning competition in which those who sing for a living into a mike are paired with those who normally talk into one.

The show demonstrates two frequent problems in TV. One is format copying, so that a hit show – in this case, *Strictly Come Dancing* – is milked for every possible imitation. Already we've had the ice-dancing version and now the singing one. You just know that the tap-dancing and morris-dancing clones are on the way.

The other drawback is the appalling belief that there is something inherently exciting in seeing news and current affairs types letting their hair down. The original BBC newsreaders were actors (Michael Aspel, Richard Baker) who gave it up to look like journalists and it's

hard to see the logic of reversing the process now. If the *Children in Need* fiascos were not warning enough, it might have been noticed that by far the least interesting participant in *Strictly Come Dancing* last year was Breakfast News's Bill Turnbull.

Yet here come Fiona Bruce of the *Ten* and Nicky Campbell of *5 Live Breakfast*, making fools of themselves in *Just The Two of Us*. Why can the BBC think they will have more authority announcing the deaths of British troops in Iraq or terrorist attacks on London after we've seen them croak-karaoking through "Dead Ringer for Love"?

Indeed, the bankability of Bruce and Campbell within the news division may have been reduced by the intriguing revelation from voting patterns (which are broken down across the UK) that large areas of the country

I'm-mad-me exhibitionists who leap into the air shrieking and kicking their legs beneath them on receipt of even the most banal information.

Equally inevitably, there's the spin-off show, *The Apprentice – You're Fired!*, in which the most recently departed participant reviews their fate, in what is so blatantly a rip-off from Channel 4's *Big Brother's Little Brother* that Sir Alan Sugar would surely sue if it happened to him with a product.

But, because television isn't a proper business, it breaks the usual market rules. Products don't need unique selling points; they can be exact copies of the opposition. The peak-time of Monday 27 January will take an unfortunate place in television history as the night when two documentaries with titles opportunistically connecting them with famous showbiz products went head to head.

This desperate tendency to pretend that all factual programmes are really films or sit-coms has been apparent for some time, so that a film about sharks becomes *The Real Jaws* and an investigation of hotel standards *The Real-Life Fawlty Towers*. But, even by these standards, *The Real Dad's Army* and *The Real Rain Man* are particularly feeble. This concept just about works if the movie being invoked shows something unlikely to exist – say, *The Actual Gandalf* or *The Real Harry Potter* – but it's surely well-known that *Dad's Army* was a comedy based on an actual war-time organisation and that Dustin's Oscar-rewarded performance dramatised the existing medical phenomenon of savants.

As this year's Academy Awards are again dominated by biopics, stand by for *The Real Capote*, *The Real Murrow* and *The Real North Country Women* among many others. But there's a depressing circularity in endlessly proving that films based on true stories had a true story behind them. Wouldn't it be nice if someone had a real idea for a documentary for a change?

'Remote Controller'



"Who are Chantelle and Preston?"

seem to detest them even on nights when they have clearly not been the worst performers.

The return of *The Apprentice* depressingly demonstrates that even a successful reality TV show will be subjected to populist tinkering. The first series made a decent fist of anglicising Donald Trump's American job-offer format, with Sir Alan Sugar managing to teach some basic business lessons to students who had some interest in tuition. But the rule of reality TV is that, in series two, you don't get people who want to be on this show but the ones who are just generally desperate for a media career. The producers have exacerbated this problem by going for crazed

AD NAUSEAM

FRENCH Connection and its favourite adman Trevor Beattie are back with a brilliantly original idea – stir up a scandal with a mildly risqué spot in a bid to bring some free media attention to your brand.



This time the tacky film in question features two women having a vicious fight, slowly stripping off before ending in a passionate kiss. It may be a hoary old ploy but Beattie obviously thinks needling middle England still sells clothes.

The real scandal, however, is that Beattie's film is a shameless rip-off of a pop video made only last year by a dance duo called Groovecutters. The video was made by the same director (David Bowie's son Duncan Jones), used the same actresses, the same locations and is frame-for-frame the most flagrant bite seen in adland for some time.

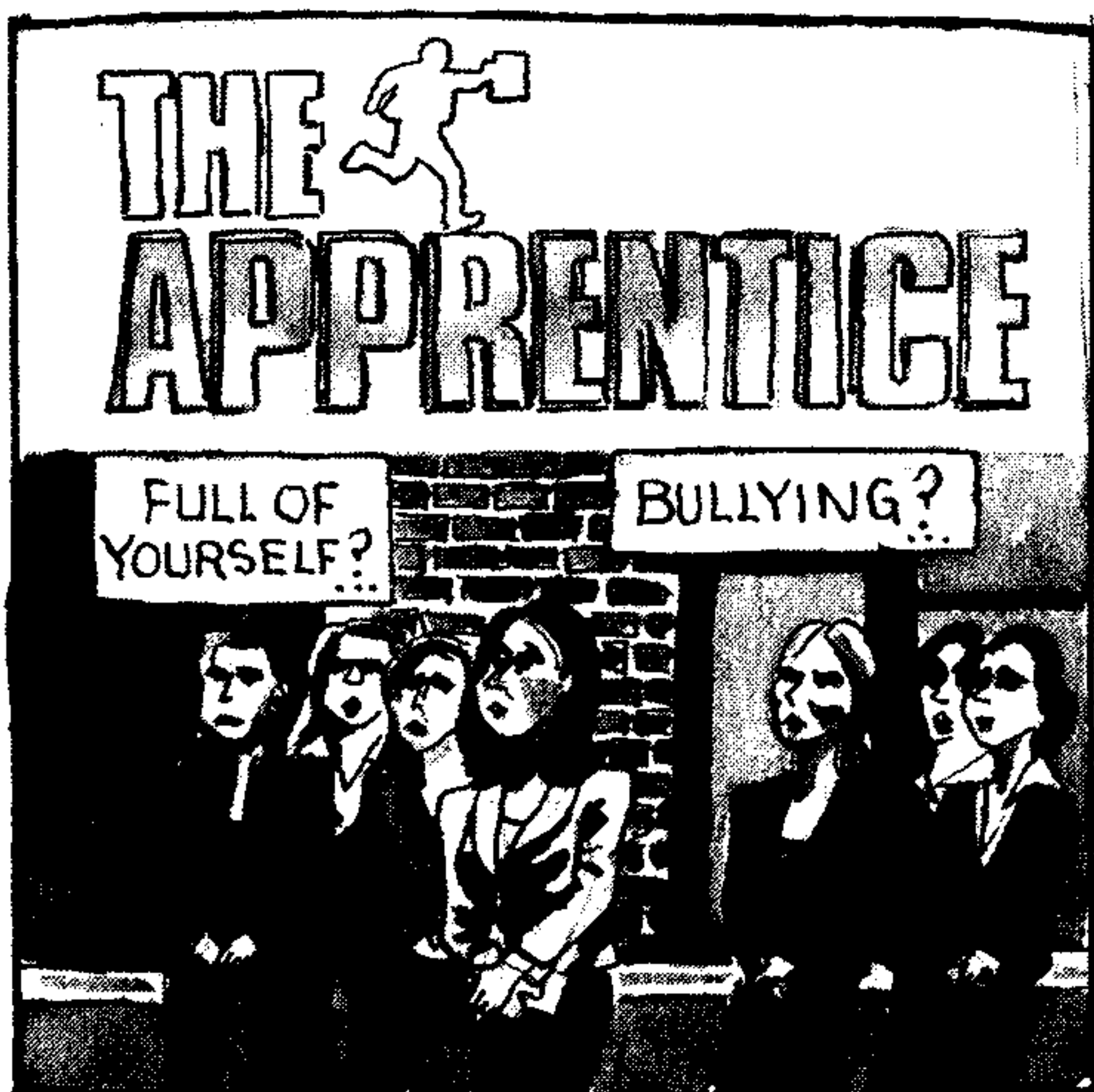
Readers wishing to compare and contrast should visit www.groovecutters.com. The question now is when Trevor Beattie sold French Connection this "idea" to front its £2m campaign, did he mention that he'd nicked it?

AS THE World Cup hoves in to view Nike has fired the first shots in the tournament that matters – the marketing one – with its new Joga Bonita/Play Beautiful campaign.

Made by Wieden & Kennedy in Amsterdam, the 90-second slot is called "Cause" and features a hirsute Eric Cantona hijacking a German football show, lamenting that the game has been diminished by liars, cheaters and foulers. "I am here to remind the world that this game is about skills, heart, honour, joy, team spirit... we can make it beautiful again," he says. Clips of dirty fouls and play-acting are shown, followed by a medley of Nike's roster of contracted stars playing the game beautifully.

One of them is Wayne Rooney, a player renowned for his honour and team spirit, including expletive-laden tirades against referees, team-mates and managers as well as selfless gestures such as throwing away the black armband he was wearing in memory of Emylyn Hughes after being substituted in a 2004 friendly against Spain.

Cantona himself wasn't averse to the odd bit of ugly conduct, such as his infamous stamp on Swindon's John Moncur in 1994 which the *Times* voted the 44th worst tackle of all time. Needless to say, his kung-fu kick at Crystal Palace isn't included in the Joga Bonita medley either. Finally, fans may recall that one reason the 1998 World Cup final was such a bad example of the beautiful game was because a certain sportswear firm reportedly insisted that the Brazilian striker Ronaldo must play – even though he had suffered a fit before the game. Joga Bonita indeed!



SATANIC PANIC

A BOOKLET called *A Can of Worms: Yes, You Can! Working with Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse* has sparked controversy among professionals and academics who specialise in this sensitive field.

As revealed in *Eye* 1150 (*Satanic Panic*), the 74-page document, published by the Scottish Executive in December 2005, lists useful contacts including organisations dealing with survivors of so-called ritual abuse (formerly known as Satanic abuse) – a notion long ago exposed as a myth.

The dangers of this nonsense still being peddled by a network of believers across the UK are not lost on people who have been falsely accused of being devil-worshipping, animal-sacrificing paedophiles, as recently as 2004 on the Scottish island of Lewis (see *Letters*, *Eye* 1152). But potentially even more widespread harm could be caused by *A Can of Worms* being distributed to “healthcare, social work professionals and other frontline workers” across Scotland.

A group of eminent psychologists and psychiatrists has written a devastating critique of the booklet and called for it to be withdrawn, or substantially rewritten.

In a scathing seven-page letter to the Lothian Health Board, the distributors, copied to ministers and officials from the Scottish Executive and UK Department of Health, the critics question the authors’ apparent lack of knowledge of the academic literature. And they attack the advice they give to practitioners that they should “always” look for childhood sexual abuse as the root cause of a range of mental health problems from eating disorders and depression to drug and alcohol addiction and personality disorders. “There is almost no condition that the authors do not consider a sign of past abuse,” they wrote.

The booklet’s recommended reading list

includes a library of discredited “self help” books which suggest the reader should try to recover supposedly repressed memories of abuse. These include a much pilloried American book, *The Courage to Heal*, which encourages readers to believe they were sexually abused, if they think they were, or have “body memories”, even if they can’t actually remember it. The *Can of Worms* booklet also refers to body memories as if they were recognised scientific symptoms.

The letter says: “This document demonstrates an almost total lack of awareness of the necessary information and relevant literature. Consequently, it is at best, a long way from fulfilling its stated aims of providing ‘good practice guidelines for working with male and female survivors’. At worst it is propagating pseudo-scientific and widely discredited beliefs about the effects of childhood sexual abuse.

“If the guidance set out in this booklet is followed, then many vulnerable people could be damaged... Some people who have not been sexually abused, but who have the ‘symptoms’ will be led into a false belief that they were, and may experience false memories; their mental health will also be severely damaged.”

The authors of *A Can of Worms* are Dr Sarah Nelson, a research fellow in the sociology department at Edinburgh University (see *Letters*, *Eye* 1151) and Sue Hampson, a “person centred counsellor” with a social work background in the NHS and mental health. They both work for Health in Mind, formerly the Edinburgh Association for Mental Health, which published research by Dr Nelson on 22 adult survivors of sexual abuse in another booklet, *Beyond Trauma*, in 2001.

That study was approved only after the group’s ethics committee considered concerns from a project advisor, a consultant psychiatrist, that Nelson had no clinical training to qualify her to conduct such interviews.

Approval was suspended and reinstated only after Dr Nelson reluctantly agreed to notify the participants’ GPs of their involvement.

Dr Nelson, a former journalist, has published many articles on child abuse, and chapters in books on ritual abuse including the notorious Orkney case. They have generally been carefully worded and measured. But the *Eye* has obtained a paper she delivered at a conference at Warwick University in 1996 organised by a group called Ritual Abuse Information Network and Support (RAINS), set up for child care workers and therapists who believed in satanic ritual abuse despite a government inquiry concluding in 1994 it didn’t exist.

Admitting it was “not an academic paper” and not based on any formal research, and that she did not have the expertise in mental health which others might have, Dr Nelson argued that it was not surprising that many victims of satanic abuse suffered from mental health problems such as eating disorders after being forced to eat and drink such things as “human and animal flesh, blood, urine, excrement, vomit, maggots meat and drugged drinks”. She confidently estimated more than 1,650 people in Edinburgh had been involved in satanic ritual abuse.

Dr Nelson is a member of the Scottish parliament’s cross-party group on Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse which launched the *Can of Worms* booklet as part of a £2m government-funded national strategy to improve services for abuse survivors.

On her university website she writes: “My major research interest is in childhood sexual abuse. Particular interests include mental health and sexual abuse.” However, her PhD, from the University of Strathclyde, in 1979, was not about child abuse or mental health but loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. In a later book she explained she worked as an “unqualified social worker” to do the research.

• DUMB BRITAIN •

- *Quizmania*, ITV
- **Chuck Thomas:** He works in a circus, makes children laugh, looks like Ronald McDonald and rhymes with “frown”. For a possible £4,000, what is he?
- **Contestant:** A joker.
- **Chuck Thomas:** OK, caller, can you give me an occupation beginning with “s”?
- **Contestant:** Er... psychiatrist?
- *Kiss FM*
- **Presenter:** What black-and-white animal are some police vehicles named after?
- **Contestant:** Zebras.



- **DUMB IRELAND**
- *Today FM*, Dublin
- **Ian Dempsey:** What is the name of the fictional town in which *Coronation Street* is set?
- **Contestant:** Manchester.

MEDIA NEWS

AS BBC1 prepares for the imminent return of *Jackanory*, another series featuring literary readings by actors is quietly disappearing: this month will see the last edition of the World Service’s *Off the Shelf* which for more than a decade has featured great works of literature from around the globe abridged in 15-minute chunks and broadcast to around 40 million listeners.

The show – which at the time of writing is broadcasting J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* read by Sir Derek Jacobi – will disappear from the schedules along with much of the station’s music programming and drama in April, as part of what commissioning editor Harriet Green terms the English Language World Service’s attempt to “rationalise” its programmes in favour of, yes, you’ve guessed it, rolling news.

“Instead of being a channel where it can be unpredictable what you will tune in and find – it might be a concert, it might be a news programme, it might be a religious affairs programme – we want to make it more predictable,” Green explained to outraged

listeners on the World Service’s feedback programme *Write On* last week.

“All the information we have indicates that serendipity is not what people want. We have to ask, do they expect a reading, or do they expect something which is going to help them make sense of what’s happening in the world?” That daily readings from literature might do just that is a possibility that does not seem to have crossed Green and her colleagues’ minds.

• GOING LIVE •

- **KAY BURLEY** was on great form covering the BAFTA awards ceremony for Sky News.
- “It’s a great movie!” she gushed at Paul Haggis, director of *Crash*, adding: “I haven’t seen it.”
- Next up was the actor Peter Sallis. “Peter! You’re the voice of Wallace and Gromit!” Kay ventured. After a difficult pause Sallis replied: “Gromit doesn’t have a voice. He doesn’t even have a mouth.”

ARTS NEWS

WELSH Assembly Culture Minister Alan Pugh’s plans to take funding for Wales’ six biggest arts companies out of the hands of the Arts Council of Wales (see *Music & Musicians*, 1151) are on hold after the minority Labour administration lost a vote on the issue.

Opposition AMs had called for consultation with the arts community and a funding review before the plans can go ahead. The earliest that review is likely to report is December, and consultation is likely to tell the assembly what everyone has already been trying to explain to Mr Pugh: politicisation of the arts through direct-funding is an unpopular and dangerous idea.

SUPERMODELS

K E R B E R



DOING THE ROUNDS

BACK in December, Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt was finally forced to admit the extent of NHS debt (predicted to hit £948m in England alone by the end of March) and ordered hospitals in areas where money has run out to delay operations until the start of the new financial year in April.

In effect, patients are no longer treated according to clinical need, but according to the state of their local trust's finances. As Hewitt put it: "I understand the anxiety patients will feel if they are living in areas where their hospital or PCT is in deficit... but the funding is simply not there to do it."

This of course is the same Patsy who has pressurised already broke PCTs into prescribing Herceptin off-licence, but then an unproven wonder drug for breast cancer scores far more political points than the proven benefits of surgery. Now hospitals are being penalised for "over-performing" in getting their waiting lists down. The three-star Darent Valley hospital in Dartford, Kent, is the best in the country according to the government's own criteria and yet has had to delay hundreds of gynaecological, urological and orthopaedic procedures.

This has sparked an interesting spat between Andrew McIlvine, a consultant surgeon and clinical director of Dartford and Gravesend NHS trust, and Dr Howard Stoate, the jogging ex-GP and loyal Labour MP for Dartford. McIlvine wrote to Stoate after his appearance on ITN news: "I was astonished to hear you on live TV stating

that we had burnt our budget because we were too efficient getting our waiting lists down to four months. This, as you well know, is an untruth and I am very disappointed by your public behaviour. To keep within the target of six months, it is obviously necessary to get most of the patients operated on before the final week of the six-month wait or we will breach your government's beloved targets. I can well imagine that the PCT is not as well managed as one would like, but the fact that its shortage of funds has brought a well functioning three-star hospital to its knees, and to a state where targets will almost inevitably be breached, I find more than a little tragic..."

Stoate took a dim view of this. "I hope that re-reading your letter you will come to regret the tone and language that you have chosen to adopt," he said. "I find it is rarely wise to communicate

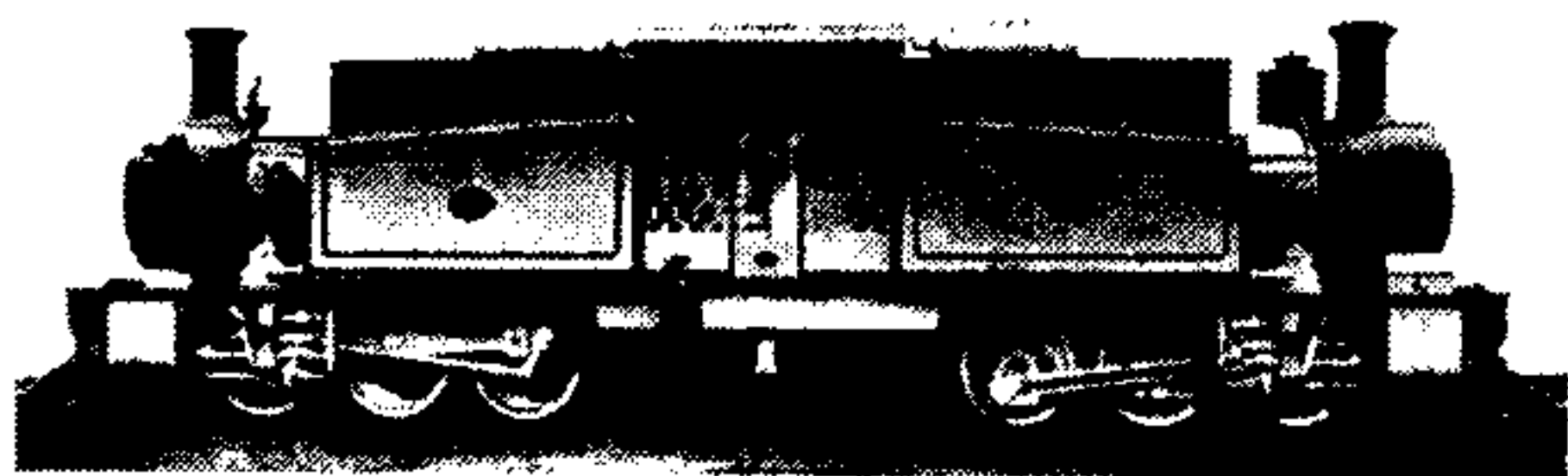
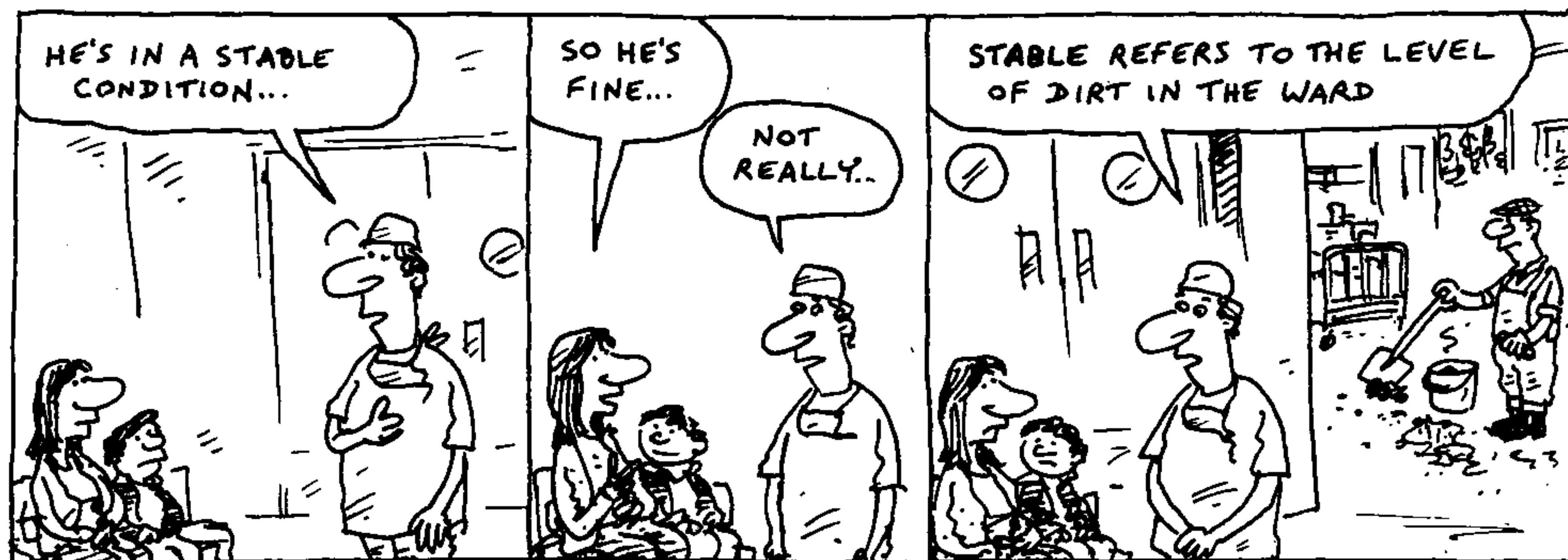
one's private views about the veracity of someone's comments in a letter written in a professional capacity. I would suggest in future that you confine your actions to your professional duties at the hospital, and desist from issuing such intemperate and ill-informed invectives."

Stoate then stood by his remarks, saying they were consistent with briefings he had been given by Mark Devlin (trust chief executive) and Alasdair Thomson (chair of the PCT). But were they true? Either way, patients who've had their procedures cancelled have suffered distress, hospitals may be financially penalised for missing targets and Labour's election promise of treating everyone within 18 weeks of referral from a GP is looking flimsy. Oh, and don't get sick before April.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY



SIGNAL FAILURES

The Scottish play

GNER has played the Scottish card, after rail regulators decided there wasn't enough capacity for extra Leeds services (specified in GNER's franchise deal) but provisionally agreed that a new firm, Grand Central, could run three trains a day to Sunderland.

Sadly for GNER this tussle is in England, and Alistair Darling (Transport Secretary, Scottish Secretary and Edinburgh South West MP) has proved he doesn't much care what happens to English transport while Scotland races ahead (*Eyes passim*). For example, he scrapped an east-coast mainline strategy, focused mainly on bottlenecks towards the King's Cross end, before its planned publication in February 2004. That gave him the ignorance he needed to award GNER, shortly before the general election, a headline-grabbing franchise which promised many more services on the east-coast mainline.

Losing the Leeds v Sunderland battle, GNER went on the offensive in Scotland last month. It said that Grand Central's services would affect its London-Edinburgh trains, with up to a third cancelled or having up to 30 minutes added to journeys. Apparently it forgot to explain how there's enough capacity for it to run 12 more Leeds trains a day yet Grand Central's three trains each way – non-stop for 210 miles London-Thirsk – will worsen journeys for Darling and his fellow Scots.

GNER's scare tactic seemed to work. Darling's department leaned on the rail regulators – who have postponed their final decision because "there are some issues which need further discussion and clarification".

ANOTHER new franchise in trouble is One, which last month made "some changes" – the technical term for axing 41 trains per weekday (95 on Saturdays).

The changes "reflect experiences of the initial operation of the new timetable during the first few weeks and customer feedback received" – ie the angry reaction to its mass cancellations since December. Somehow One, part of £2.6bn-a-year National Express Group, forgot to explain that by spiriting away so many trains from Cheshunt, Chingford and Enfield etc, it will pay lower fines

for cancellations and lower compensation to commuters.

DARLING's view that buses are better than trams for England was apparently reinforced by "ftr", hailed by its promoter FirstGroup as a "totally new concept in public travel".

Last March he attended the launch of ftr, which turned out to be just another design of bendy bus. A Freedom of Information response shows that Darling also discussed the totally new concept in a meeting with FirstGroup chief executive Moir Lockhead in October. At other meetings Lockhead explained ftr to junior transport ministers.

Lockhead's message that ftr offered a cheap alternative to trams was music to Darling's ears. Darling had already pulled the plug on Oldham-Manchester trams and stalled tram schemes for Leeds and Portsmouth. Three weeks after discussing ftr with Lockhead, he axed the Leeds and Portsmouth schemes. Announcing his Leeds decision, he said the city had the chance "to develop a first of its kind, showcase bus system". What could he have had in mind?

Of course, it's just coincidence that unregulated buses in Leeds, Portsmouth and between Oldham and Manchester are mostly run by... FirstGroup.

PS: FirstGroup's website explains ftr is texting shorthand for "future" – appropriate because the website promises: "The first 'ftr' services will start in York at the beginning of 2006." The concept remains in the ftr, while the reality of the prnt is widespread anger at FirstGroup's huge bus-fare rises in York. The city council is so cheesed off it voted to censure the government for leaving Maggie Thatcher's bus deregulation intact.

LAST MONTH Merseyside abandoned its fight against Darling's belated decision to pull the plug on its tram scheme, after 1,000 tonnes of tram rails were imported. Perhaps the Scousers will recoup some cash by selling the rails to a country that can afford trams – Scotland. Darling killed four English tram schemes because of cost inflation but public cash for Edinburgh's tram scheme was increased last month to cover, er, cost inflation.

'Dr B. Ching'



ROTTEN BOROUGH

RAVE ON

BY 'ECK! A man of principle on Doncaster council? Deputy mayor Aidan Rave, 13¾, resigned from the cabinet last month because, he said, his values of "honesty, integrity and accountability" were "no longer compatible" with those of Mayor Martin Winter, the subject of not one but *three* police investigations (*Eye* 1151).

Some mean spirits claim that Rave's resignation, and that of fellow cabinet member John Mounsey, was motivated by a desire on the part of Winter's hitherto loyal deputy to distance himself from his tainted boss before the May elections. A disgraceful slur.

After Rave's stab in the back, four local Labour MPs – Rosie Winterton, Caroline Flint, Jeff Ennis and Ed Miliband – rallied round. They issued a *joint* statement saluting Winter's "important work" and achievements. But the kiss of death could be the intervention of Labour's Yorkshire and Humberside regional director, Nan Sloane, who said: "We are very sorry to hear of these resignations from the cabinet but pleased that seven other cabinet members have publicly supported the elected mayor."

Sloane has a gift for backing the wrong horse, having endorsed every short-lived "new regime" throughout the Donnygate scandal. The high point came in 1998, when she told a meeting of the Labour group, after another round of arrests had left them leaderless, that the next leadership had better consist of councillors Colin Wedd, Mick Farrington and Charles Harrison, or the whole group would be expelled. All three subsequently had their collars felt. (Farrington and Harrison both pleaded guilty to charges of expenses fraud; the utterly blameless Wedd was not prosecuted.)

Sure enough, the ink was scarcely dry on Sloane's endorsement of Winter when it emerged that the mayor had personally intervened in favour of a developer, Peter Thompson, whose application to build on a field that he claimed was a "garden" had been rejected after vigorous local opposition. Winter demanded that the application be looked at again, and, according to emails between officers, personally "confirms the land's use as a garden". Labour councillors fell into line, the decision was reversed, Mr Thompson stands to make a lot of money and Knacker has swung into action.

Inspector K is also taking an interest in other planning decisions taken under the Winter regime, particularly those that have advantaged developers Lloyd Nicholson and Mick Murray – whose properties throughout the town displayed prominent "Vote Winter" banners in both mayoral elections – and Doncaster Rovers' chairman John Ryan, whose interest in redeveloping Rovers' Belle View stadium so happily coincided with Winter's most recent election campaign (*Eye* 1151).

● **ONE** of the most unsavoury crooks on Doncaster council in the 1990s was Ray

Stockhill, a former mayor and deputy council leader, who died last week. Stockhill wasn't just caught with his snout in the expenses trough. In 2002 he received a two-year suspended sentence for taking bribes from property developer Alan Hughes. He spent much of his ill-gotten gains on his mistress – a drug-addicted prostitute whom he helped jump the queue for a council flat. On hearing of his death, his former Labour colleagues announced that there would be a minute's silence in his honour at this week's council meeting. How touching.

LOWTON CLEAR

VETERAN Camden Labour councillor Brian Woodrow was kicked off the development control committee he chaired after the Standards Board for England came to a preliminary finding against him, following a complaint by borough solicitor Alison Lowton (see *Eyes* 1135 & 1143). Lowton's main gripe concerned a call Woodrow was said to have made to a friend at English Heritage, which the SBE considered could have been "prejudicial" to his position on a planning application for a huge development at King's Cross.

Happily there is no taint of prejudicial interest about Woodrow's successor as committee chair, Heather Johnson. Last month the committee considered a major application by British Land and Crown Estates for the Euston area. Ms Johnson made a declaration that the application was in her ward and "I am a member of the West Euston Partnership, but I have not been party to any discussion of the application, so I don't think I have a problem of being prejudicial." She then proceeded not only to vote in favour of the application, but, as the committee was split 5-5, exercised the chair's casting vote, ensuring consent for the scheme. The borough solicitor's representative at the meeting kept mum.

Ms Johnson's entry on the Camden register of members' interests does not, in fact, show her as being a mere "member" of the West Euston Partnership regeneration body – it records her as a board member, sitting alongside British Land and Crown Estate representatives. The matter has been brought to the attention of Lowton, who will no doubt take swift action.

● **AFTER** the party, the hangover. For Labour councillors in Wigan, the headache comes in the form of a Standards Board investigation into a Christmas party in the town hall's Anjou Suite. During this sophisticated soirée, Labour councillors Rona Winkworth and Eunice Smethurst, deputy mayor, spotted the Community Action Party's general secretary Tracy Lavelle on the dance floor. According to Lavelle, she was verbally and physically abused by the pair, who accused her of gatecrashing. Smethurst allegedly approached her, shouting: "Have you paid?" then bumped her across the floor with her ample hips. The local paper printed a photograph of a bruise on Ms Lavelle's arm, caused, she claims, when Cllr Winkworth grabbed her. No doubt Standards

Board sleuths will get to the bottom of the matter.

COURT NAPPING

RESIDENTS of Southwark have election year to thank for a freeze in council tax. Next year, however, things could be different, with the tottering Lib-Dem regime of Nick Stanton bequeathing a 10 percent rise or more.



The council's liability insurer, American Insurance Group (AIG), has refused to handle a controversial claim from the former directors of black-owned Imperial Gardens nightclub (IG), who are suing the council for more than £9m. The club's directors claim this figure represents the business they lost after their club was forced to close when the council granted planning permission in 2001 to Fairview New Homes for a block of yuppie flats practically on top of their premises.

While Fairview's application was whizzed through, the council dragged its feet over Imperial Gardens' own application – deliberately and, say IG's former directors, because of racism in the planning department. When the case opened in the high court last month, AIG was not represented.

The district auditor wants to know why. It may be because Southwark did not inform AIG of its liability, after a district auditor's report in February 2004 made it clear that IG's owners had been wronged. Or it may be because council leader Stanton allegedly offered the claimants £500,000 to settle in September 2003.

A former planning manager was arrested last year on suspicion of corruption. And new evidence in documents extracted from key files – found under the desk of a senior officer – has recently been handed to Inspector Knacker. If the IG lawsuit is successful, band D taxpayers could end up paying another £120 a year for the council's blunder.

● **FIFE** is one of the 43 local council areas to benefit from the Department of Transport's "Kickstart" scheme of grants to fund new bus services – in this case a new route to Edinburgh airport. In Scotland, however, they like plain speaking. Hence, presumably, the *Glenrothes Gazette's* report that "Operators Stagecoach and the government have provided £972,000 to start the service under the Kickback project..."

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

CAMPAIGNERS who won a long legal battle to stop developers building 76 homes on school playing fields in the Warwickshire town of Rugby, had that Groundhog Day feeling in January when notification of a new planning application arrived.

In 2003 Persimmon Homes made a deal with Lawrence Sheriff School in Rugby to build housing on part of the playing fields, while the school would get a £3m cash boost to improve its antiquated indoor sports facilities.

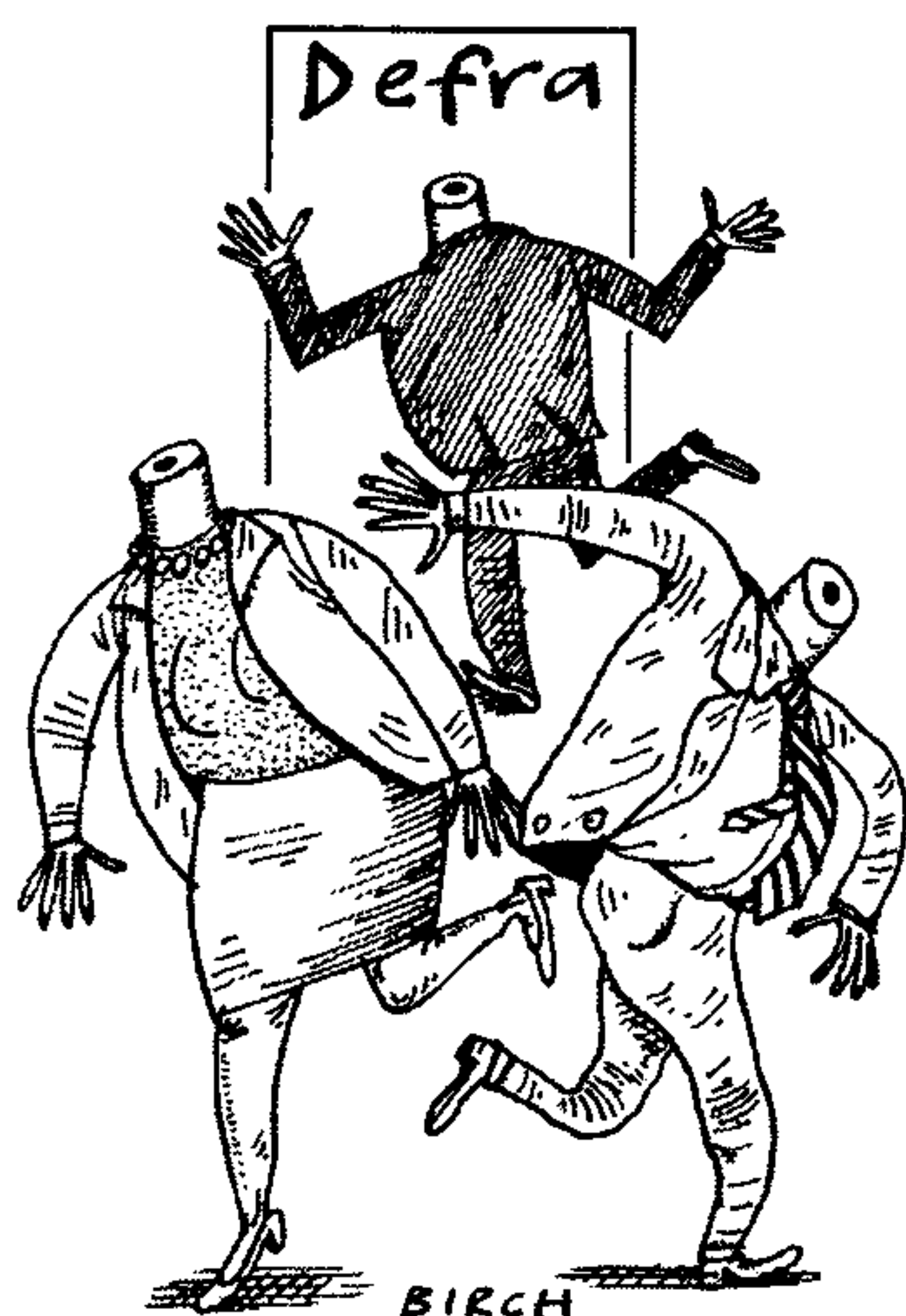
Local residents objected, as did planning officers, but they were overruled by councillors who gave the go-ahead. The plans were then called in by John Prescott who rejected the scheme last May – but still the school, the council and the developers pressed on, until the plan ended up at a public inquiry in the high court. It was thrown out once and for all in December.

The protesting residents and pro-playing fields campaigners were delighted with the result until last month, when a new application was submitted by Persimmon, seeking to build... 74 homes on the playing fields at Lawrence Sheriff School! Other than the numbers, the plans have barely changed, but campaigners must pick up their petitions and start all over again.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER





Down on the Farm

NO DOUBT we must congratulate Professor Neil Ward and his team at Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy on their blistering report *Foot And Mouth: Five Years On*, reviewing the record of Defra in the five years since it was set up in the wake of the 2001 epidemic.

They find that, following the mayhem inflicted on the rural economy during those nightmarish months, the interests of farming and the countryside have slipped even further down the government's agenda. There is no sign that any lesson has been

learned from the government's grotesque mishandling of a crisis which cost the nation an estimated £8bn. Since then, the plight of Britain's farmers has continued to get worse.

It is splendid that these learned academics should have come to such conclusions. But readers of this column might be forgiven for a sense of déjà vu. After all, it was this column which gave more comprehensive coverage to the government's blunders during the foot and mouth debacle than any other paper (see *Private Eye's* "Not The Foot And Mouth Report" 2001).

The *Eye* pointed out at the time that this epic catastrophe was masterminded for Maff by a small group of computer modellers, led by Professor Roy Anderson and Professor Neil Ferguson, who were without any experience of animal diseases. Yet, as our media now work themselves up into a frenzy about bird flu, who has Maff's successor, Defra (the Department for Elimination of Farming and Rural Affairs) appointed as one of its chief scientific advisers on the handling of this new animal health crisis? Step forward Professor Neil Ferguson. Five years on, as those Newcastle academics so rightly observe, it is clear Defra hasn't learned any lessons whatever.

'Muckspreader'

NOOKS and CORNERS

STALHAM is a small town in Norfolk close to the Broads. It has a fine medieval parish church which stands in its churchyard, filled with good and interesting old headstones, many 18th century – altogether what any visitor would expect and hope for.

But now the rector, the Rev David Anderson, together with a "regeneration group" called the Stalham with Happing Partnership (should that be Happing Clappy?) proposes to remove all these headstones to create a "welcoming area". This will consist of a wide path, steps, paving and a little bit of grass and can be used for exciting events like outdoor services, maypole dancing and a Christmas market.

Costing a mere £33,000, it will link St Mary's Church with what really matters: the High Street shopping area. Unlike the depressing old churchyard, full of unwelcome reminders of death, this new piazza will be "distinctively Stalham", according to the partnership chairman, Martin Roche.

In many parts of the world, gravestones are smashed and desecrated by religious fanatics, racists and other true vandals. In England, these reminders of mortality – often objects of beauty as well as historical records – are removed by vapid idiotic clergymen. Naively, I thought this sort of vandalism was a thing of the past.

RESIDENTS of Whitehall Court in London are understandably upset that the Crown Estate wants to demolish the former Metropole Hotel which straddles Northumberland Avenue and Whitehall Place.

Designed by F. & H. Francis and J.E. Saunders in 1885 as a luxury hotel, it has been used as government offices since 1936. The building is

structurally sound but it is to be replaced by a new block of offices, flats and shops. The Crown Estate has hired Professor Robert Tavernor (*Eyes passim*) to rubbish this unlisted building and argue that it must go because the external stonework is so decayed and badly repaired. But Westminster Council designated it "an unlisted building of merit" and English Heritage considers that "the Metropole Building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the nationally significant Whitehall Conservation Area. As such there is a presumption in favour of retention..." The Victorian Society meanwhile argues that the facades can well be repaired: "After all, there is not a single medieval stone left on the exterior of Westminster Abbey."

The old Metropole contributes to the self-consciously French character of the Haussmannian boulevard, Northumberland Avenue. It may not be a great building, but then nor is the proposed replacement designed by Eric Parry Architects (who could surely do better). The Victorian Society has described the Crown Estate's proposal as a "Fascist invasion" of Victoria Embankment, but that is unfair as Mussolini's official architecture was much better than what is proposed here. Repetitive boring arcuated facades – sorry: "rhythmically ordered elevations" – merely wrap around the exterior. The rounded corner facing the Thames is a lost opportunity: why not put a turret there, as on Whitehall Court, or top the curve with a circular pavilion restaurant on the roof? Whereas the old Metropole and its Frenchified neighbours all have pavilion roofs and varied and interesting skylines, all the new building will have is a lumpen attic.

The Metropole should stay.

'Piloti'



CHEQUES IN THE POST

IN earlier times the record £11.7m fine meted out last month to the Royal Mail for "serious breaches of its licence obligations in 2004/05 to protect the mail and deliver it on time" might have been followed by some senior heads rolling – maybe even those of chairman Allan Leighton or chief executive Adam Crozier.

But under the commercial regime put in place by Patricia Hewitt when she was Trade Secretary, the company's directors instead trousered six- and seven-figure bonuses for the very same year.

The payouts were triggered because, while breaching its licence, Royal Mail also hit its "renewal plan" target by turning losses into operating profits of £537m (see *Eye* 1134). But this dramatic turnaround wasn't achieved by the managerial brilliance of Leighton, Crozier and co; rather it came through the time-honoured technique of cutting services and slashing the wage bill by laying people off.

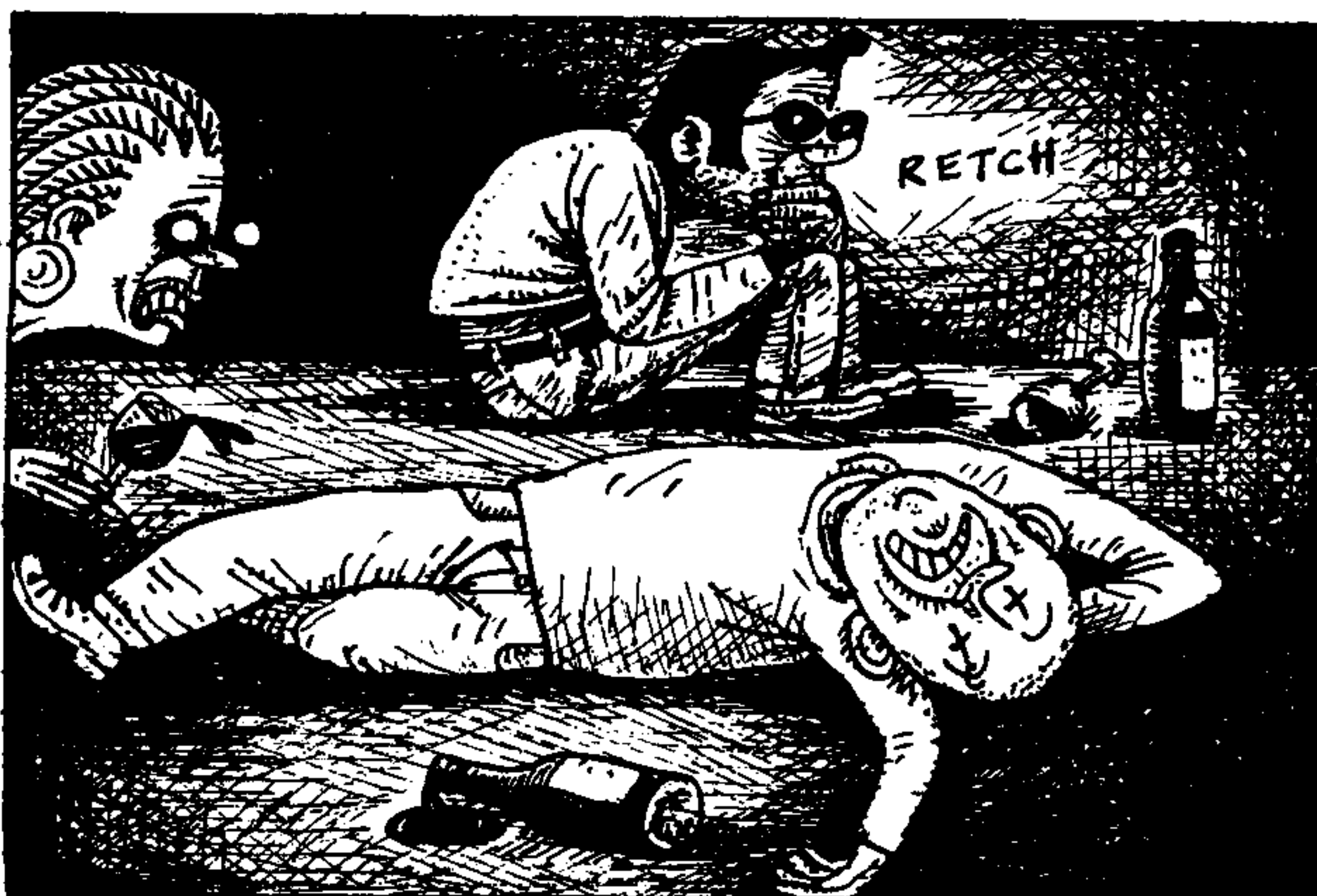
The result was that tens of thousands of (much cheaper) temporary agency workers were required. And it was the lack of vetting and training for these people that Postcomm identified as the chief reason for the failure to protect the mail.

Meanwhile, Royal Mail headed off serious protest at the job losses through "share in success" payments to staff. These set the firm back a whopping £218m which, had it been taken off operating profits, would have resulted in the "renewal plan" target being missed by some way, so scuppering the directors' bonuses. But accountancy rules came to the rescue, the payments were classified as "extraordinary" (and thus not deductible from operating profits) and the champagne could be uncorked in the boardroom.

Naturally the Royal Mail board's incentive arrangements contained nothing so dull as complying with its licence to operate the post. On the contrary, they gave them a licence to play fast and loose with it. As a result, in Postcomm's words, "around 14.6 million letters, packets and parcels in Royal Mail's care were lost, stolen, damaged or interfered with." Happily for the directors, the regulator's findings only emerged once the bonus cheques were safely banked and too late for much of an outcry.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH



Letters



Those Cartoons – You Write...

Sir,

Well, after all the noise about your journalist colleagues, you too failed to print the cartoons or even show where they could be viewed on the internet. After all your robustness over the years in resisting being bullied by everyone from Cap'n Bob upwards, you have been cowed by a bunch of religious bigots. How sad...

DAVID CUTTS.

...The truth is out my friend. You'll take a pop at the police and the royal family etc, but when it came to something really serious like freedom of expression and fighting imported religious bigotry, you lost your bottle...

JOHN TURNER.

...I'm glad you didn't print the cartoons and I wouldn't have cancelled my non-existent subscription if you had, but if the reason you didn't was, as you suggest, fear, then I've less respect for you than before. Puerile and gratuitous offence aimed at the powerful is one of the pleasures of the Eye – the same aimed at the weak and powerless is just plain nasty. Don't ban it, but don't pretend it's anything other than what it is however horrible and absurd the overreactions have been...

JOE MORRISON.

...I really appreciated your no-nonsense coverage of the "Affair of the Danish Cartoon" and the delayed over-reaction in certain quarters to a mere drawing. I am sure that any rational people who were truly offended by the cartoons did not go around inciting sectarian murder and genocide. Keep up the good work...

ANDREW CASEY.

...About one year ago you had a front cover depicting the Virgin and Child with a bubble that was offensive to many Christians.

I cannot recall the particular "joke" or its context, but I do remember the subsequent remark of one letter writer that you would not have the guts to lampoon Islam like this.

Case proven, I think; your Gnome editorial this week is pathetic and not redeemed by the informed and informative comment in Street of Shame...

V. CHAMPION.

...Only one cartoon I did find as being really offensive to Muslims. That being the one with the bomb in the black turban (the symbol of the prophet's family) with the main pillar of belief or Shahada ("There is no deity except Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah") written in Arabic. What does this convey? That Islam at its very heart is a threat to the world ready to explode and that this violence stems from our

prophet (pbuh).

Well I suppose the cartoonist was proved right wasn't he? Us "Mussies" can't take a joke so we turn to violence as an answer, despite it being against the teachings of our prophet...

ADAM SHAH.

...Your coverage of the Muhammad cartoons controversy was in many ways admirable – apart from the fact that you did not see fit to publish one of them! The detailed verbal descriptions in lieu were rather a cop-out. I find this very disturbing: what is the point of having Private Eye if it indulges in such self-censorship?... the offending cartoons were no more than fair comment – and relatively mild by most standards...

SASHA CLARKSON.

...Issue 17th March does you proud. A mere 10 or so cartoons mocking Muslim stereotypes – despite all the provocation! I mean – these people – sense of humour – British – laugh at ourselves – they wouldn't be allowed in Saudi...

PHILIP FOXE.

...It is one thing to defend the right to publish these cartoons, and to oppose people who threaten violence in response: this is necessary and important. But it is quite another to evade the truth about what has happened: that a deliberate provocation has been organised in order to produce a crisis so that a whole community of millions can be stigmatised. Your Scenes You Seldom See cartoon lampoons Islamic clerics as being unlikely to see two sides to every question. Fair enough. But it is advice you might try and take yourselves...

JUSTIN HORTON.

...I have subscribed to Private Eye for about 10 years now and I find it an amusing distraction, but rarely incisive. However, you surpassed yourselves with your attempt to analyse the 12 "islam" cartoons. So far as I am aware no other publication has tried such a commonsense approach to the issue.

Shame then that you were fairly accurate with your analysis of all the 12 apart from the first and most notorious one. Yes, Islam, like all other ideologies, has been (ab)used for violent purposes, but the point is not well made by the cartoon. In suggesting that the reaction of a tiny minority of thugs can justify a cartoon showing Mohammed with a bomb in his turban you have stretched a poor point to absurdity and detracted from the force of your other 11 brave and intelligent arguments. Most of the reaction to the reaction to the cartoons from muslims has been restrained, reasoned and peaceful, just like the vast majority of the muslim world.

I am a devout muslim, and I have praised your approach to the issue, but I will not bore you with my views as to whether the cartoons were offensive or with my views on free speech issues... yawn...

KAMRAN RAHMAN.

...Eye 1152 – absolutely brilliant! Nuff said...

RICHARD LICHTEN.

Strange brew

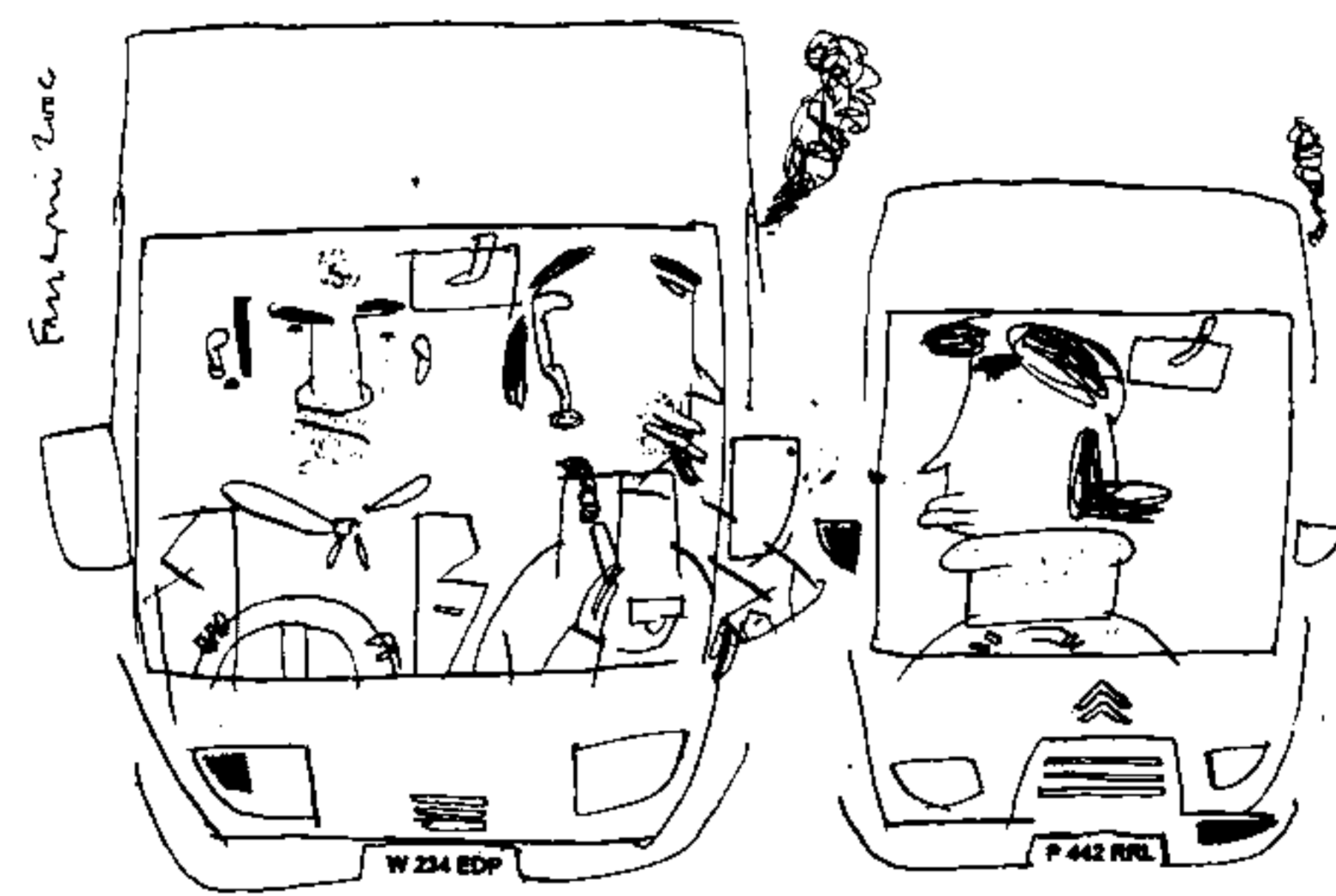
Sir,

It's rather a cheap shot to take Ginny Fraser's remarks on coffee enemas out of context and put them in Pseuds Corner (Eye 1152). As is clear from the rest of the Sunday Times article from which her comments were taken, Fraser was cured of terminal cancer using a natural but gruellingly intensive regimen that included organic fresh juices, mega-doses of supplements and coffee enemas. She now spends her time helping others who opt for natural cancer cures. I think she deserves some indulgence regarding which blend she chooses to put up her fundament and how she passes her time while it's "brewing".

Yours,
CLAIRE ROBINSON,

Chagford, Devon.

Scenes You Seldom See



"If you pull back just a bit, madam, we won't scrape your wing when we turn left after the lights"

They criticized Kenny...

Sir,

Your criticism of South Park (Eye 1152) is unfair. The episode featuring a Mohammed cameo is 504, "The Super Best Friends", in which the prophet is one of four religious leaders who team up to fight evil. This episode – a tease on the conjuring tricks used by religions – has appeared on Channel 4 and cable TV in the UK and of course in the US, where South Park is created. The "Tom Cruise" episode (912, "Trapped In The Closet") lampoons Scientology. Neither episode has been banned in the US, and both episodes can be found on the net.

I believe Paramount, the cable service which has the UK licence for series 9, has ceased to show the Scientology exposé under threats of legal action from Mr Cruise, a well-known Hubbardista. This censorship is nothing to do with scruples or bias or fear from the creators of South Park, but is yet another example of the vicious and repressive UK libel laws. (Something of which Lord Gnome has some experience?)

Yours aye,
MR PETER LUCEY,

Wokingham, Berks.

First timer

Sir,

I'm disappointed that after years of reading the Eye my first letter to you should be so boring, but I want to correct something in your article on UnitedHealth Europe. There are several things that I might correct, but the wrongest bit is the assertion that we used data collected in Trent to prepare our bid for a practice in Derbyshire. We are contractually forbidden from doing so. And we didn't.

I hope that my next letter will be more amusing.

RICHARD SMITH,
Chief Executive, UnitedHealth Europe.

Railing...

Sir,

Dr B. Ching wonders (Eye 1152) why HMG will not admit that Network Rail is a state-owned company. When it took over Railtrack, it had to call Network Rail a private company in order to avoid paying shareholders about £10 per share – the four-year average price of Railtrack – under European human rights law on re-nationalisation. Instead, the shareholders were paid £2.60 per share.

My loss of £100,000-plus is the largest known among the shareholders – do I get a prize?

Yours sincerely,
GERARD GRAY,

Glasgow.



We can fix it

Sir,

You claim that "Risen's source suggests Tenet told Dearlove the [WMD] intelligence was far from strong" (HP Sauce, 1152). But Dearlove's Downing Street memo to Blair saying "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy" does not mean that the intelligence was weak. It means that the intelligence was being fabricated.

Take the evidence of the sale of uranium by Niger to Iraq. That was based on forged documents routed through Sismi, the Italian military intelligence service. As La Repubblica has pointed out, Berlusconi was determined to ingratiate himself with Dubya. MI6 published this "evidence" in the September dossier without checking its authenticity. Bush used it in his State of the Union speech although Ambassador Wilson had already determined that the story was nonsense. The nuclear threat from Iraq was then used to market the war to the American public ("market" is White House chief of staff Andrew Card's word).

And who forged the Niger documents? Special Prosecutor Fitzgerald has now received the report from the Italian parliamentary intelligence oversight committee into Sismi's role in the affair. Some details have already leaked. It seems that Alan Wolf, previously CIA chief of station in Rome with the job of liaison with Sismi, forged the documents with a retired CIA colleague. Unfortunately Fitzgerald won't be able to question Wolf, who died 18 months ago.

So of course CIA chief Tenet told Dearlove that the intelligence was being fixed round the policy. CIA men were doing the fixing.

Yours,
NORMAN DOMBEY,

Brighton, Sussex.

Big noise

Sir,

Anna Lomax (Eye 1151) should put her drum away, she is mistaken. Street of Shame used the word "crescendo" correctly – in addition to having the meaning of a gradual increase in volume it also refers to the loudest or most intense point reached. Strange you didn't point this out and defend yourself.

Yours,
CLIVE BIGGER,

Newtownards, Co. Down, Ireland.

Slip ahoy!

Sir,

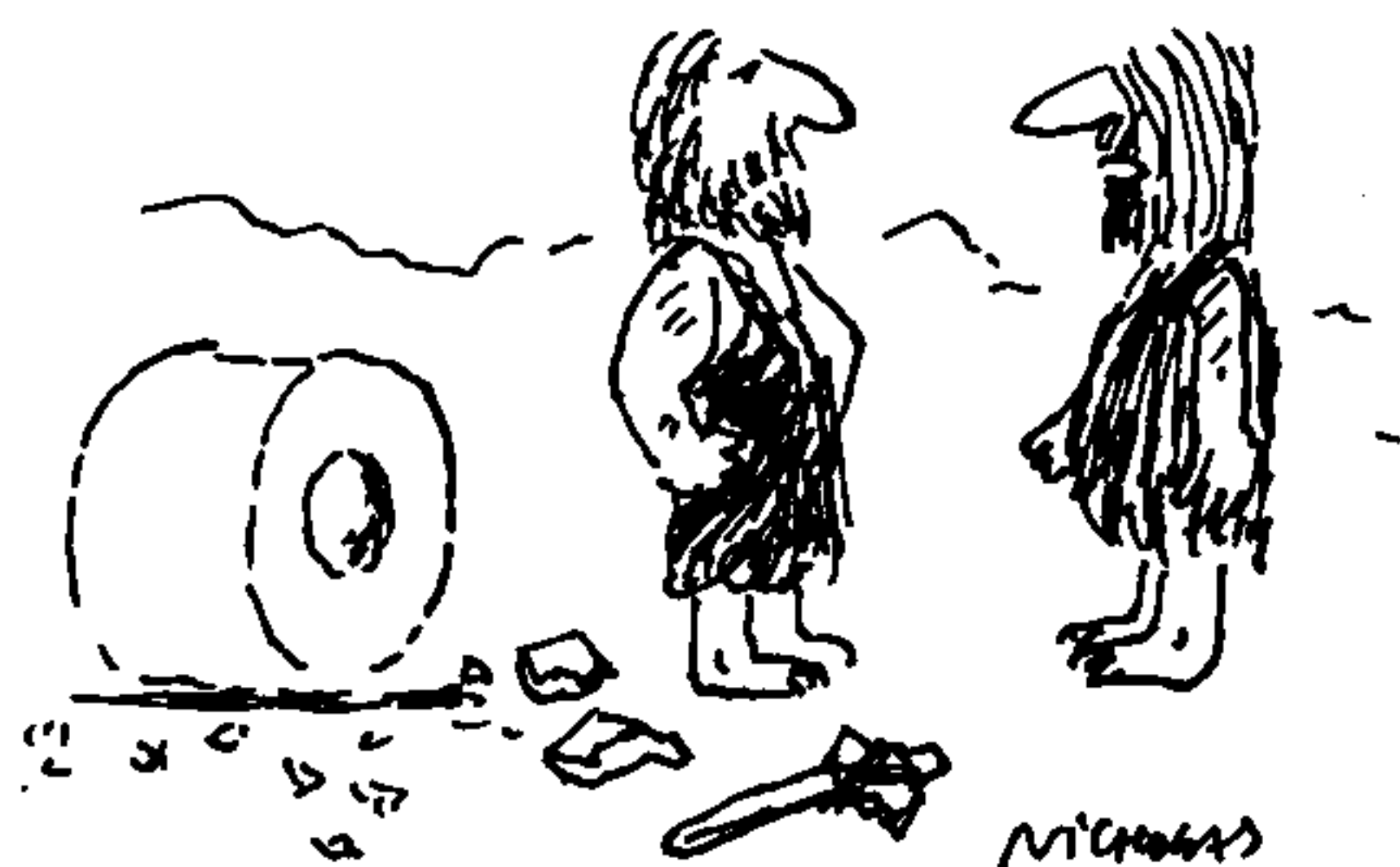
Tut tut! Not like you to fall for that well-known misquotation so regrettably often attributed to Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen (Eye 1152).

It would have made no sense for Nelson to claim he couldn't see any ships and then go on to encourage his men to engage the enemy more closely. The quotation your cartoonist was grasping for was "I really do not see the signal".

I know you're going to receive dozens of letters pointing this out but please print mine. There has to be a reason I've kept my Ladybird Books all these years.

REGINALD HARROLD,

Netherlands.



"That's all very well, but what will you do when the stone runs out?"

Perfect Knight

Sir,

Shock! Horror! Minister strives to keep election promise to his local electorate! For that is indeed what Jim Knight is doing by persisting with his attempts to provide the good citizens of Weymouth and Portland with a relief road. Over 90 percent of this population are very much in favour of this scheme, needed even more now that A&E facilities have been moved to Dorchester. The need for an alternative to the current dangerous and congested road, which incorporates a hairpin bend halfway down a steep hill, was recognised as far back as WWII.

Yours faithfully,
JIM TOMPKINS,

Weymouth, Dorset.

Conspiracy theory

Sir,

Regarding your "Daily Mail" article on Elvis and Diana... you left out one chilling parallel. Elvis was managed by one ("Colonel") Tom Parker; Diana's ex-husband's stepson is one Tom Parker (Bowles).

Coincidence? I don't think so.

Yours,
DARYL BAMONTE,

London W4.

Lookalike



Corpse



Mrs Beckham

Sir,

I was watching Tim Burton's "Corpse Bride" last night and I noticed the startling similarity between Mrs Victoria Beckham and a corpse.

Yours,
PHILIP KNIGHT,

Via email.



"He [Alan Shearer] is arguably the best footballer this country has ever produced. I don't think anyone can argue with that."

DANNY HIGGINBOTHAM, BBC
(Tom Green)

"She [Shelley Rudman] beat everybody to take silver in the Skeleton."

LORNA DUNKLEY, Sky News
(Nathan Medlock)

"That was a great goal from Maloney considering both his feet were off the air."

ANDY WALKER, Scotsport
(Adam Lovatt)

"McSheffrey literally danced past three red shirts."

BERNIE SLAVEN, Century 100FM
(Gavin Parnaby)

SOLUTIONS

"Bonds Worldwide Express: we aim to offer total logistical Solutions" – couriers

"Realcare Hose Reel Solutions" – hose reels

"Container Lift – Container Movement Solutions" – container lifts

"Premdor – Doors - Windows - Cubicles: delivering joinery solutions to the world" – joinery

"Turflect Future Solutions" – turf

"At Boots you'll find everything to help you get through those winter months including Beechams, Benylin & Lemsip cold and flu solutions" – medicine

~~~~~ All submitted by readers ~~~~~

## Tory boy

Sir,

I fear Remote Controller is either being disingenuous or dim in his assessment of BBC1's Question Time (EyeTV, 1152). The main plank in his case for the programme's dumbing-down is the recent appearance on the panel of Adam Rickitt, "famous for playing a teenager on Coronation Street". Working himself into quite a lather about "booking soap stars", "some bloke from the Rover's Return" and "Babs Windsor, Chantelle and Pete Doherty", he omits to mention that Rickitt, 27, who attended Kingsmead Prep, Sedburgh School in Cumbria, got four A-Levels and was set to study law at Cambridge before joining the Street, was, in October 2005, approved as a prospective parliamentary candidate for the Conservative Party. While none of these qualifications especially endears him to me, they do rather explain his appearance on Question Time. We've all seen vapid panellists on Question Time. They are called cabinet ministers. My name's Ben Elton etc.

ANDREW COLLINS,

Reigate, Surrey.

## Cricket balls

Sir,

In this week's issue Remote Controller describes Sir Ming Campbell as "bonkers" for referring to Freddie Flintoff as the safest pair of hands in England. It's a tribute to Flintoff that if catching is indeed what he is least celebrated for, that's only because his batting and bowling are Herculean. Flintoff is regarded as one of the best slip fielders in Test cricket.

Personally, I think editorial standards at the Eye have declined since Garry Bushell took over.

EMIL FORTUNE,

London.

## Tight Fitz

Sir,

As one of that sadly declining number of punters who have had the pleasure of your organ 1,152 times, I feel obliged to inform Dame Sylvie Krin that the original surname of the royal equerry was Fitzalan-Tightly.

I have no wish to offend Dame Sylvie's delicate sensibilities, but I am afraid Fitztightly doesn't have quite the same – er – ring (if you'll pardon the expression).

Yours geriatrically,  
DAVID BLOOD,

London N11.

Letter from Ramallah  
from Our Own Correspondent

THE only thing worse than losing an election, it seems, is winning one.

Hamas has had an excellent line in recent years opposing everything that has been done in the name of the oppressed Palestinian masses. But even its most dreamy-bearded strategists didn't anticipate the scale of last month's landslide victory. Instead of securing the hoped for role of junior partner in an uneasy coalition, which might have allowed continued sniping at Fatah, they ended up with full responsibility for government.

Yes, we voted full-on for the beards: from the thick white whiskers of our Palestinian prime-minister-to-be, to the startling orange tuft that one new Hamas MP achieves with henna. But what lies behind? We still don't know if Hamas will stick as closely to its pledge to both destroy the Zionist state and end our mess of corruption as to its Islamic commitment to male facial hair.

The election revealed not so much what Palestinians do want as what we don't want. Yasser Arafat won himself a few crumbs of land in the 1990s and with his Fatah cronies did a fine job of emulating neighbouring despots without even having a state. Arafat's generosity was as famous as it was misplaced and idiosyncratic. People who worked with him remember how, if an impoverished family came to the office asking for medical help, he would grab a wad of bank notes from his drawer and hand it over without counting. Though Finance Minister Salam Fayyad, appointed by pressure of the donors in 2003, made much effort to clean up the mess, it came too late. Our attorney-general is now probing allegations that officials in the PLO-run administration transferred to their personal accounts money earmarked by Arafat to buy land in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem area – money precisely set aside to stop the advance of Israeli settlements.

We might have joked that Hamas stopped the suicide bombings because it needed all the votes it could get; but the truth is we would have voted for almost anyone but Fatah. Thanks be to Allah that the United States kept pushing our President Mahmoud Abbas to hold the democratic elections we needed to bring Hamas into power. But our American friends seem none too thrilled by the consequences of this experiment with democracy. They have even started asking for their aid money back – unless Hamas becomes an Israel friendship society and puts away the bomb belts for good.

Iran, where elections also produced a government to give the Great Satan nightmares, might provide an alternative source of funds. But the Europeans still look like the softer touch.

In contrast to the last administration's cash-and-carry approach to accounting for millions of dollars in aid and budget support, Hamas has operated a fairly tight ship. And Hamas is nothing if not just. When it shot dead a suspected Israeli collaborator near Ramallah last year, it made sure his children's school fees were paid.

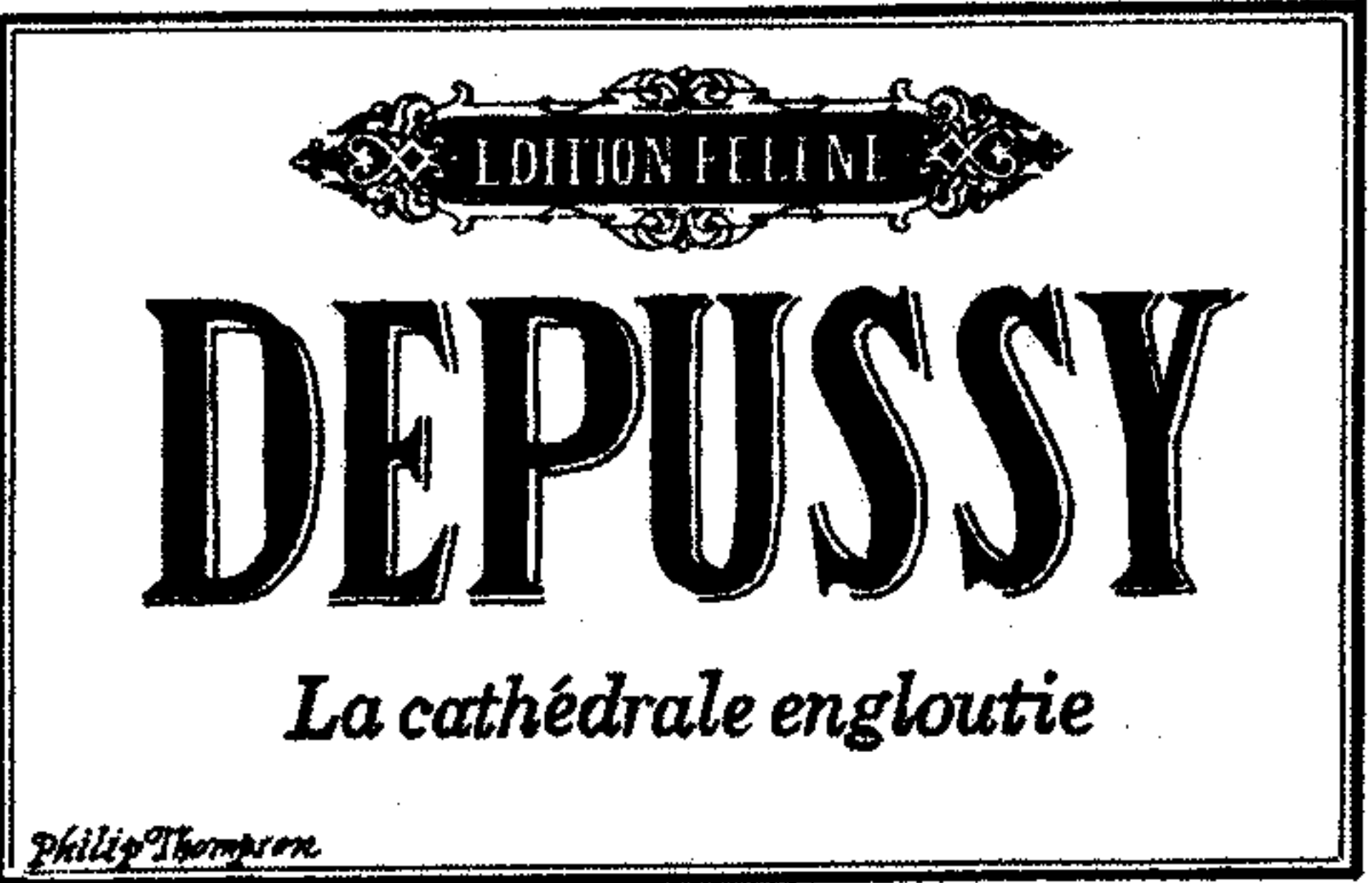
Some of us here in Ramallah's cheerful drinking spots are still a bit worried about Hamas's bar rules, and our women are not too keen on the idea of covering up. But the bearded brothers have shown they can be flexible. The talk of annihilating Israel tends to be played down these days. The volcanoes of revenge for Zionist crimes seem to have sunk into dormancy; and the more eloquent Hamas spokesmen even get their voices on Israeli media. One of Hamas's holy men has predicted that Israel is going to disappear by 2020 anyway. That may be one reason they have started talking of a possible a 10-year truce. If one follows Hamas leaders' thinking, by the time we get to 2016 that would leave no more than four years left to kill.



# FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

“The first animal I taught to play the piano was my cat Fuchs,” Viviane Theby of the Wittlich Fame Academy told reporters in the Rhineland. “We began by playing duets together, then moved on to giving concerts, and recently he recorded his first CD, which is selling quite well. Teaching my dog Bellos to dance was harder, and took six months, but he’s now learned the ‘dog dance,’ a set routine which we often perform together. They’re both able to express themselves artistically, and now that I’ve opened up the Fame



Academy to the public, other people's pets can also learn to sing, dance, and play a musical instrument.”

Theby, who also teaches dance at the Scheuerhof Animal Academy, explained how she develops these unusual skills in pets. “I use the same principles as other animal trainers. If the pet hits the right note, it gets a reward, and animals like to repeat actions that they get rewarded for. Take Katie the hen, for example. If she hits the right note on this xylophone with her beak, she gets some chicken feed. Her fellow student Gackeline has already mastered the first bars of ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star,’ although Katie is finding it harder to learn. The most talented pets will get to perform in public concerts, but mainly I’m teaching them to play instruments and to dance because it’s a way for them to communicate. Animals don’t automatically respond to our words, but this is a way for them to express themselves, and create a

stronger bond with their owners.” (*Libertatea [Romania]*, 28/1/06. Spotter: Steve Ingram)

- o -

“Most men have a selective memory,” Wendy Rameckers of the Piet Zwart Institute for Retail and Design told a press conference in Rotterdam. “They know all about their cars, but they never seem to know their wife’s bra size. They go into a lingerie shop to buy a sexy bra for their wife or girlfriend, but when the assistant asks them what size they want, they just say ‘a handful,’ or point at other women in the store for comparison. It’s hopeless.

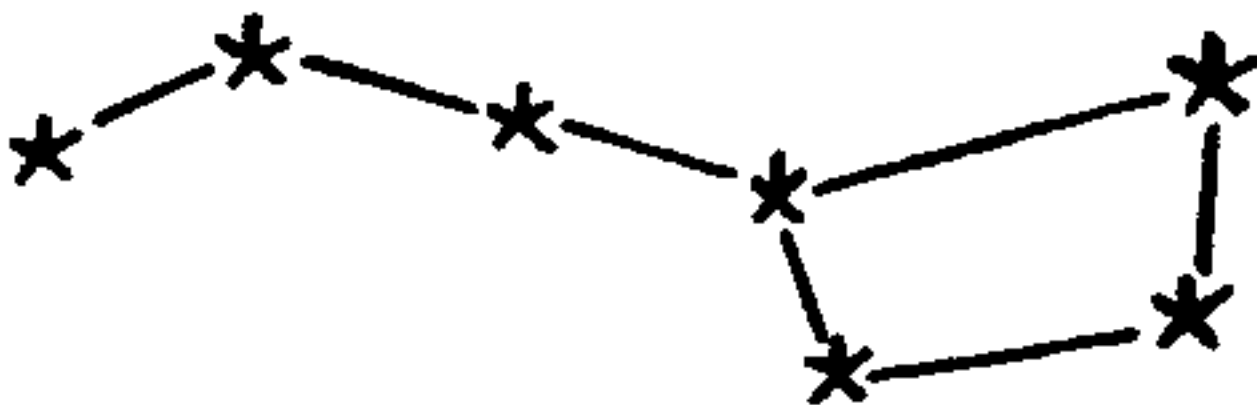
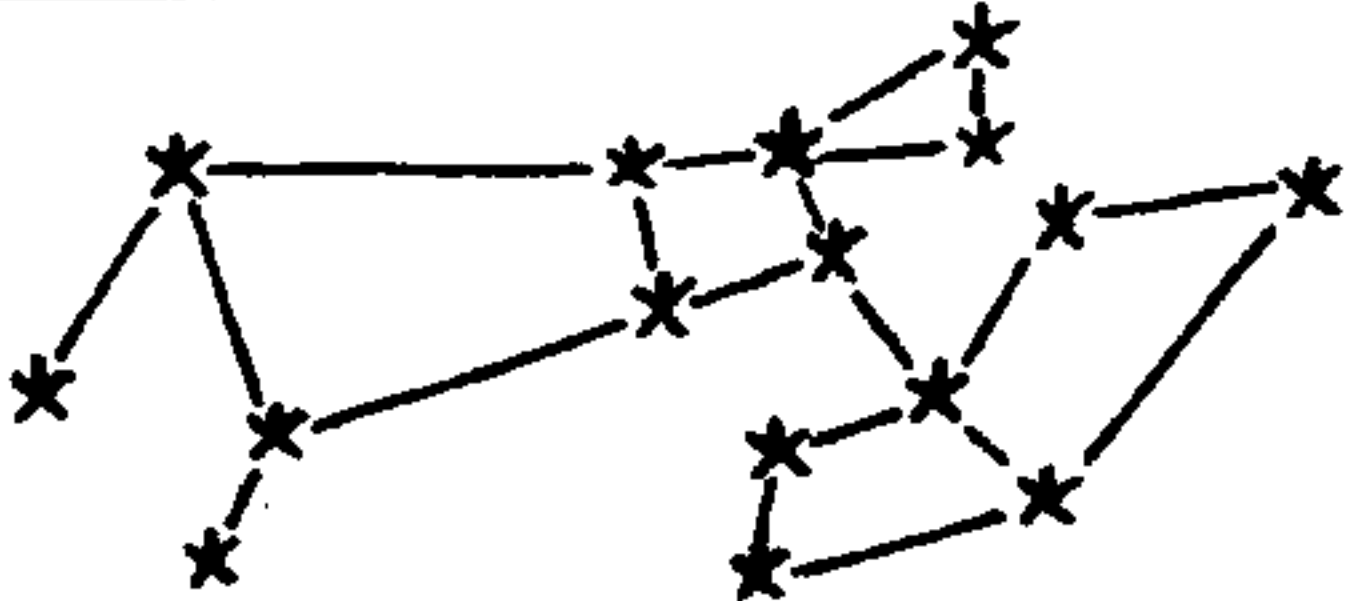
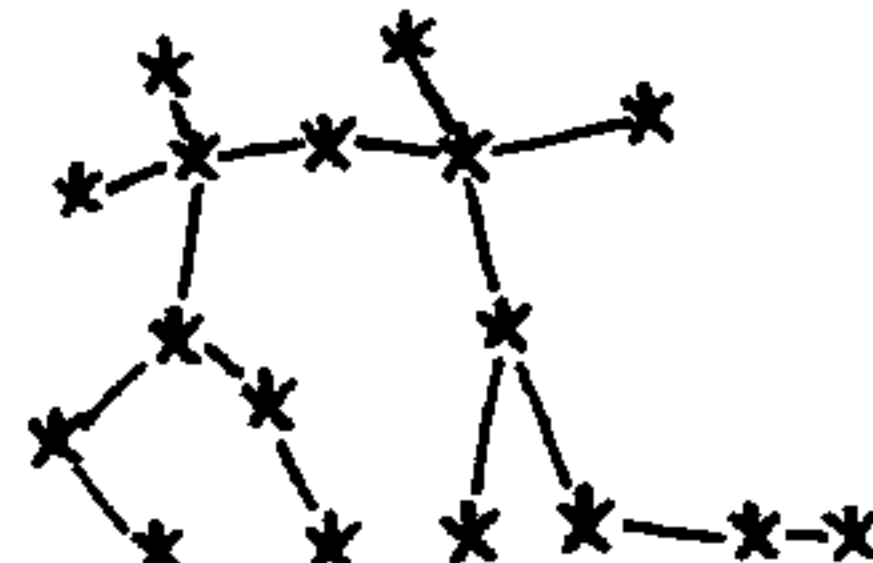
“But now, with this wall of fake breasts, male shoppers will find things much easier. The wall consists of rows of silicone breasts in all sizes, from tiny to enormous, with a very natural look and feel. All the man has to do is walk along the rows, looking and touching the breasts until he finds the size he recognises. What could be easier?” (*Het Nieuwsblad*, 31/12/05. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O’Byrne)

- o -

“Johannas Pope had told her caregiver that she didn’t want to be buried after her death because she planned to return to her house,” Coroner O’Dell Owens told his court in Hamilton, Ohio, “and it seems that the caregiver took her at her word. When she turned up one morning in the summer of 2003 and found Johannas dead in her chair, staring at the television in an upstairs room, she didn’t call the authorities. She just switched on the air conditioning and left. And that’s how Johannas stayed for two-and-a-half years, until the police found her last Wednesday.”

Coroner Owens explained that “Johannas had members of her own family living on the ground floor, but they’d made no attempt to see if she was alright. The air conditioning slowly mummified her body, and it was only when it malfunctioned a month ago, and neighbours began complaining about the smell, that the police were finally called to investigate. Standing outside, they could smell death, so they unblocked the staircase and broke down the door. Inside, they found what was left of Johannas, sitting upright in her chair, with the tv set still on.

“The caregiver’s name is being withheld, because it’s not clear that she has committed any crime. I have spoken to her, and she’s a normal person, not someone from another planet, or really off the wall. I think she just acted out of loyalty, friendship and love for her friend, who had wanted to stay in her own house after death.” (*Irish Examiner*, 9/1/06. Spotter: Andy Cording)

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# ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And if there is one thing which the modern church stands for more than anything else, it is the need to stamp out the "sin" (or social evil, as we call it nowadays) of smoking. So let's do it!

In fact, for once, I think the word "sin" is really quite relevant when you think how many millions of people in the parish are now dying every day as the result of the selfish actions of a tiny minority!

It is only when we are confronted with what my friend and mentor the Rev. Dubya of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons so rightly calls "evilitude", that we come to a new understanding of all those old teachings about the wages of sin being death!

And doesn't it say in the Good Book, "thou shalt not smoke" as the first commandment? (*Book of Deutyfree 7.12*).

No beating about the bush there! No little sub-clauses about smoking being OK in the Working Men's Club, or in the Britannia Arms, so long as they are only serving pork scratchings!

I know Mrs Hewitt and Dr Reid may have given some people the impression that some kind of compromise might be acceptable.

And I know dear old Jock Reid got misty-eyed about the thought of his old comrades back in Glasgow being deprived of their only source of pleasure, as they huddle together for warmth in the bar over a pint of whisky!

Goodness me, we've moved on from those days, Jock! And a good thing too!

No, to ask for any compromise on this, the most centrally important moral issue of our time (apart of course from the sin of fox-hunting!) is like asking for a compromise on any of the other commandments!

You can't say "Thou shalt not kill", but it's perfectly alright to go and do it in another country, like Iraq or Afghanistan.

It's like saying, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, unless you are a member of the PCC like Mr Blunkett"!

All of which brings me to my fifth point, which is the difficulty some people seem to be having over the meaning of the word "glorification".

I really can't understand why there should be any confusion over this word.

Look at it this way, if we really admire someone and think they're really good at their job, and that everything they do is brilliant – which it may be! – then it's only right and proper that we should "glorify" them! In other words, give them the "glorification", which is their due.

So, what's important is that you should learn to glorify the right people and things,

and not to glorify the wrong people and the wrong things!

Hey, I know it's a long word – and I wouldn't bank on Mr Prescott getting very far with it! – but really it's very simple!

I've even written a chorus for next Sunday's evening service:

*Glor-if-i-cation, glor-if-i-cation!*

*Sing it out across the nation!*

*Praise our vicar to the sky,*

*Glory, glory, glor-ify!*

Yours in glory!

Tony



The splendid new stained-glass window. As seen by local artist, Mr de la Nougere



## To Remember In Your Prayers

● Poor Mr Marshall-Andrews, who has got into yet another fight with an innocent parishioner. I know that Mr Marshall-Andrews and I have had our differences, but it is always sad to see any fellow human being falling prey to an insatiable craving for alcohol. It is obviously too late for poor wino Bob to derive any benefit from a visit to AA or, indeed, a course in anger-management! So I'm sure you will all want to pray for a speedy release for this sick individual from his mortal suffering. I am sure when Bob reaches 'the other side' that he and Mrs Mowlam will have a lot to discuss! T.B.

## On sale in the Vestry Bookshop



*How to Sue the Vicar*  
by Cherie Booth Q.C. (£915.99)

Cherie's latest book explains in easy-to-follow legal language (and a mere 994 pages!) just how you can extract large sums of money from the PCC by suing them for compensation. (Do you really want me to put this in? David Hill.) (Yes, I bloody well do, and I'll sue you if you don't! C.B.).

## PLANNING NOTICE

An application has been lodged to construct a new vicar on a 'Brownfield' site. The site shows some signs of contamination after extensive military and industrial use. The planners are confident that they can clean up the site and convert it into an attractive and popular vicar. If you have any objections, keep quiet because we are going to do it anyway. D.H.

## Question and Answer with Mr Prescott

**Q:** Why are you building 170 new houses on St Albion's recreation ground when there is a hosepipe ban in the parish?

**A:** Due to globalised-warming there is a droughtification situation in the parish as of the current time. However the warmingisation of the globe will result in the meltdown of all the ice up north which will flood the south and we will have as much water as we want.

**Q:** Won't the houses then be flooded?

**A:** Shut up, ya pasty-faced southern tosser or you'll get a smack in the kisser. I'm bloody John Prescott me.

**Next week:** A chance to put your questions to Mr Campbell who will tell you to fuck off because he knows where you live. T.B.

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## Are you dull, dour and Scottish?



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# LIVINGSTONE ATTACKS SUSPENSION VERDICT

by Our Political Staff **Lunchtime O'Jews**

**THE Mayor of London, Mr "Red-faced" Ken,** today lashed out at the three-man tribunal who found him guilty of offensive behaviour and suspended him from office.

"I did nothing wrong," said an unrepentant "Rude" Ken, "and these men are no more than concentration camp guards, obeying orders and sentencing me to the gas chambers."

## Pissed As His Newts

"These little Hitlers," he continued, "are committing an assault on British democracy

and free speech. They should shut up or be exterminated at once."

Ken Livingstone is 61.



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**WARNING** With a Tessa you can go down as well as up



## GLENDASLAGG

**FLEET STREET'S SUPERBUG!!  
SHE'LL GET YOU IN THE END!!**

■ **NOW I'VE** heard it all!!! Mrs Oaten is taking back her good-for-nothing pervy hubby into the bosom of her home!?!? Urghhh!! You have my permission to be sick!?!? What do you have to do nowadays to get kicked out on your B-U-M?!? (Except in Mr Oaten's case he'd probably enjoy that!?!?) For gawd's sake Mrs O – wise up!!! Change the locks, throw out his suitcases, and buy a Rottweiler!?! Before you wake up with the whole of Soho sharing your nuptial bed!?!?

■ **HATS OFF TO MRS OATEN!?!?** She's the Lib Dem MP's missus who's found it in her heart to say, "Welcome home, hubby – let's forget about your sleazy nights of shame and the three-in-a-bed sex romps with rent boys"!?!? Bless!?! Your unselfish action shines like a beacon to us all in this age of easy judgements and all too ready condemnation of pervy husbands who go off and commit disgusting

acts with randy rent boys!?!?

■ **DIDN'T YOU** weep when you saw *Brokeback Mountain*, Mister!?! The touching tale of two lovelorn gay guys finding solace in the sheep-strewn sunsets of Wyoming!?! I know a tear trickled down my cheek as the credits rolled!?! Cowboy hats off to a movie that tells the story of a love that dare not speak its name!?! At last, thank Gawd, we've grown up enough to watch an adult movie without sniggering about what other gay westerns might have been called!?!?

■ **HERE they are – Auntie Glenda's Gay Cowboy films in full:**

- High Camp
- Once Upon A Time In A Vest
- Lovers' Tiff at the OK Corral
- Well Hung 'Em High  
(You're fired. Ed.)

**Byeeeeee!!!**

## 'UNBORN' TO BE GIVEN VOTE

by Our Political Staff **PETER UNBORNE**

**IN AN** attempt to re-engage young people with the political process, the Prime Minister-in-waiting, Mr Gordon Brown, today backed plans for the

**"Under Os" to be included in the franchise.**

Said Mr Brown, "In a modern age, it is ridiculous that the very, very young should be denied their chance to vote Labour in the next election".

**ON OTHER PAGES** Pop Star Found With Cannabis **4**

● Bears Found With Toilet Paper In Wood **11** ● Pope Found With you get the picture

## NEW-LOOK QUEEN



# HAMAS SHOCK OFFER

**THE** new Hamas Government in Gaza has insisted that it is ready to meet with Israel despite the Israeli announcement of punitive sanctions against it.

"Our representatives are prepared to travel to the West Bank at any time, carrying fresh proposals for peace wrapped around the dynamite strapped to their waists" said a Hamas (*cont. p. 94*)

## THE DISSIDENT VOICE



**PRINCE SPART** (Co-Chair of the Anti-Wind-Farm-and-GM-But-Pro-Prayer-Book Workers Alliance) on Inequalities In Air Travel.

Er... once again the sickening dictator Blair has blighted the lives of ordinary working-class Royals, such as myself, by forcing us to travel Club Class whilst visiting the oppressed masses of the East, which is to my mind totally unacceptable but, er, the struggle of the proletariat to gain entry to the First-Class Cabin continues despite the fascist Blair and his imperialist running dogs who (*cont. p. 94*)

*Exclusive to the Daily Mail*

## WAS SHAKESPEARE KILLED BY CANCER?

**SENSATIONAL** new evidence now suggests that Shakespeare was definitely killed by cancer... or something else... possibly.

**Tomorrow**

● Was Joan of Arc killed by happy slapper?

## Play The New Game Sweeping The Balkans



## WHERE'S MLADIC?

The former Serb warlord has skilfully blended into the crowd in this typical Belgrade fair. Can you do what the Serbian authorities and U.N. can't... and find him?



## MURRAY SET TO REPLACE HENMAN

by Our Tennis Staff **Lunchtime O'verhype**

ANDY MURRAY, the teenage tennis sensation, is about to become the new Tim Henman, according to Britain's tennis pundits.

"Murray has got what it takes," said one. "He can do quite well in minor championships, get our hopes up and then fail to win Wimbledon – just like Tim."

Said another, "He's the perfect man on whom to place

our unrealistic expectations.

"He's got everything we want from a British tennis player. He's got some good ground strokes, a fruity girlfriend and no chance of beating Federer.

**Come on, Andy!**

"So we can build him up in the next few months and then lay into him over the summer." Andy Murray is 11.



## BBC Radio 3

90.2 92.4 FM



## Composer of the Week: Berlusconi

### Opera

*The Briber of Seville*  
(surely "Milan"? Ed.)

**Act One** Silvio, the robber baron, is about to be put on trial in the city of Milano. His wily English advocate, Davide Millsano, is worried about what he is meant to say to the judge. But Silvio puts his fears at rest by presenting him with a huge bag of gold, while singing the aria "Donna tell the truth".

**Act Two** The advocate and his wife, Tessa Jowellina, are dining in their London mansion. She innocently inquires of her husband where all the money has come from to pay for their lavish lifestyle. He reassures her with the haunting aria "Donna worry your pretty little head about nothing".

**Act Three** We are now back in Milan, where Millsoni is under arrest for taking a bribe from the brigand leader. He sings the aria "Sono idiotico", in which he explains that, although he is innocent, he made a terrible error by accepting the gold in return for not telling the truth.

**Act Four** Signora Jowellina is distraught, and is summoned to explain herself to her employer, Antonio di Blairio, the chief minister of England. In his aria "Scandalo magnato", he tells her that it will not look too good if her husband's conduct is reported in the newspapers. Turning this into a duet, she replies with "Vacanza fribi", in which she reminds the prime minister that he is not one to talk when it comes to accepting lavish gifts from the robber baron.

**Act Five** The great courtroom scene, in which finally all ends happily – when it transpires that the presiding judge is Silvio's uncle. The chorus happily proclaim "Tutti innocenti" and all the accused leave the court as free men and are invited to a celebration banquet in the robber baron's castle, the Palazzo Corrupti.



# POLICE LOG

## Neasden Central Police Station

Office hours: 9-12 Mon-Tues (except Tuesday)

28 February 2006

**1000 hrs** Those officers not otherwise employed on their 'second jobs' (i.e. as window cleaners, masseurs, bouncers, burglars etc) report for breakfast. Following the unfortunate incident involving Mrs Prendergast and the Danish bacon, the canteen has been outsourced to Halal Specialities Of Neasden, who offer a selection of non-Danish pastries and curried muesli.

**1037 hrs** Grade I alert phone call received by duty officer PC Thornberry. Transcript as follows:  
**Caller:** Hullo, hullo, is that the police? Me and my family are about to be murdered by my husband, who's pointing a gun at us.  
**PC Thornberry:** Is he the licensed keeper of the gun? (Loud bang)  
**Caller:** I don't know. He's just shot my eldest daughter, Gillian.  
**PC Thornberry:** How are you spelling that? With a 'J' or a 'G'?  
**Caller:** Please help us... if you don't come quickly, we'll all be killed.  
**PC Thornberry:** May I remind you that this call is being recorded for training purposes? (Another loud bang. End of transcript.)  
 After consultation with senior officers, it was decided not to respond to this call, on the grounds that to deploy any officers to the alleged crime scene would put them at unacceptable risk, and would be in breach of Health & Safety Regulations on Safety in the Workplace. Accordingly a DPP793B was completed, giving details of the alleged incident and explaining the reasons for non-intervention at this point in time. A letter was further written, commending three officers for their exemplary role in this difficult and demanding incident, which could

well have resulted in a life-threatening situation had the correct action not been taken. Breakfast was resumed at 1125 hours.

**1521 hrs** Following a request from the Neasden Moslems for Peace, Reconciliation and Moderate Jihad, the entire station was detailed to escort a number of demonstrators to a rally in the George V Memorial Park. The 'march' was a great success, with only police-approved placards being displayed, containing such moderate slogans as 'Kill Only A Few Jews, Not All Of Them', 'Behead Most Of The Infidels' and 'A Humane Death To Everyone Who Lives In The West'.

There were no arrests, apart from two senior citizens, Daphne and Wilhelmina Sexton, 73 and 72 respectively, who attempted to disrupt the march by asking one of the officers 'What are all these people protesting about?' This was interpreted by officers as a clear attempt to incite hatred, and the two sisters were taken in for questioning. They were later released to hospital when both of them unfortunately fell over during an interview with WPC Gilly Thugsworth. WPC Thugsworth was later commended for bravery.

**1812 hrs** Two community support officers on duty in the Tesco car park distinctly heard a young member of the public using an offensive and homophobic word (i.e. 'bugger') when his trolley, containing various items of shopping, became lodged between a Renault Megane and a Suzuki Supercarry. The CSOs immediately called in the armed response unit.

**1813 hrs** Officers of the armed response unit arrived to surround the suspect, young, white, male, Caucasian, possibly armed with dangerous article of furniture (e.g. chair leg). After a brief stand-off, the suspect was shot for his own safety. The purchases in his trolley were distributed around needy members of the force - i.e. those who have not yet managed to secure a second job outside the force to supplement their meagre earnings of £36,000 a year.

## IS THE KINNOCKMETRE THE WAY FORWARD?

by Our Metrication Staff Miles Kingston

FOR CENTURIES we have measured the length of boring political speeches in good old-fashioned miles. For example, we have all heard the expression "That Labour leader's speech was miles too long".

But now all this is about to change to bring us into line with European Union speech directives.

Under new proposals, boring

speeches will now be measured in "Kinnockmetres". One Km is the standard European unit for a speech that has gone on for 1000 pages. It is the equivalent of  $\frac{5}{8}$  year in the old imperial units for boredom.

Now we will just have to get used to saying "That speech by Lord Kinnock was the dullerest thing I've ever heard by at least 753 Kinnockmetres".

Full conversion table p. 94.

Historians will remember 2006 for the death of William Pitt the Younger - our youngest ever Prime Minister at the age of 24 - or the birth of engineer

Halstead Gazette

## MODERN NURSERY RHYMES

If you go down in the woods today,  
 You'd better not go alone.  
 The woods are full of kids in hoods  
 Who'll steal your mobile phone.

(from 'Tony Blair's Picnic')



"I'M taking this crate up alone, Tony," barked Squadron Leader Gordon "Biggles" Brown, as he shoved his erstwhile co-pilot out of the cockpit and fired up the engine.

"Are you sure you're up to this?" asked his air-ace chum, nervously. "Just watch me!" shouted

Biggles, as he opened the throttle, pulled back the joystick and crashed into the runway.

THE END



## GENGHIS KHAN 'UNSURE ABOUT DAVID CAMERON'

by Our Political Staff **Matthew D'Anconservative**

**THE RIGHT-WING elder statesman Lord Genghis of Khan has expressed doubts about the direction that the Conservative Party is taking under its new leader, David Cameron.**

In an address to the influential 1222 Committee, Lord Genghis told members: "It is all very well trying to move the Party to the centre ground but if you lose the traditional core support on the right then you will never achieve what you want to do, i.e. vanquish your enemies, chase them before you, rob them of their wealth, see those dear to them bathed in tears, or clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters."

He then added, "Though I suppose we might pick up a few Lib Dem votes along the way."

David Cameron, however, was unmoved by this unprovoked attack by Lord Genghis.

### Mongolia-Tham-Thou

"Whilst I am grateful for the advice of the eminent former Tory statesman," he said, "I do think we have to try to create a more modern and inclusive Party, one that is keener on social equality and less keen on sweeping through the world putting opponents to the sword and burning their villages."

Lord Genghis of Khan is 800 years old.



"It's Icarus - I think he's contracted Avian Flu"

THE TIMES

**She's back and she's cleverer than ever**



**Mary Ann Bighead** on what I did on my holidays

**W**HO would have thought it? Four months, 40,000 miles, and 400,000 words later the Bighead family has returned to these shores, weary, suntanned, but above all very, very clever.

Yes, there were some bad moments in our round the world trip. Brainella (3) nearly lost her copy of Proust in a cafe, which would have spelt disaster for her attempts to translate it into classical Persian. Then there was the time when Intelligencia (7) fell ill in the ancient Venezuela town of Hiya Quw. Luckily her advanced medical physiology PhD allowed her to diagnose herself with a rare tropical complaint before the local doctor (Dr Haus) could even begin to solve the mystery.

But on the whole the Bigheads triumphed in adversity! Have you sailed a dug-out canoe over a waterfall and into a volcano? We

have. Have you explained Einstein's relativity theory to Mayan priests at the top of the Pyramid of Smahtipantza? We have. Have you found a cure for cancer? OK, we didn't, but then we only had four months!

But seriously, every family in Britain should go on a trip like this. Even if they aren't very rich and they haven't got a job at the Times waiting when they get back. Because it is an experience of a lifetime, which we have done and you haven't.

So, I know you are all dying to know the answer to the question, "What did you learn, Mary Ann, from your amazing adventure?" The answer is not very much because I knew it all already! They say travel broadens the mind but then in the Bighead family that might not be possible!

© Mary Ann Bighead

## the PREMIERSH\*TS



## Chelsea FC

Those expenses since Abramovich took over in full:

Players **£265m**

Wages **£223m**

Pitch **50p**

Auditor's note: Mr Abramovich denied that the quality of the Stamford Bridge ground had taken a dive. "That's the players," he said.

## Letters to the Editor

SIR – We have been reliably informed by many articles in recent days that this country faces its gravest threat since 1940, with hordes of killer birds flying in from Europe, carrying with them the deadly virus from which millions will die. Yet what is the response from the authorities when a humble citizen such as myself attempts to do his duty in stemming this horrifying assault on all we hold most dear.

The following story speaks for itself. At 3.45 yesterday afternoon, as I was wending my way home from a working lunch in our local hostelry, The Lamb and Flag, I perceived by the roadside the unmistakable form of a dead pink flamingo.

To those of us who travelled widely in the Orient, there could be no doubt that this was indeed a victim of avian flu, and on closer examination of the poor creature, I was able to detect the tell-tale symptoms of a runny nose, bad cough and feet in the air.

My immediate impulse was to rush home to contact the authorities, to alert them to the peril that had now at last arrived in our mist.

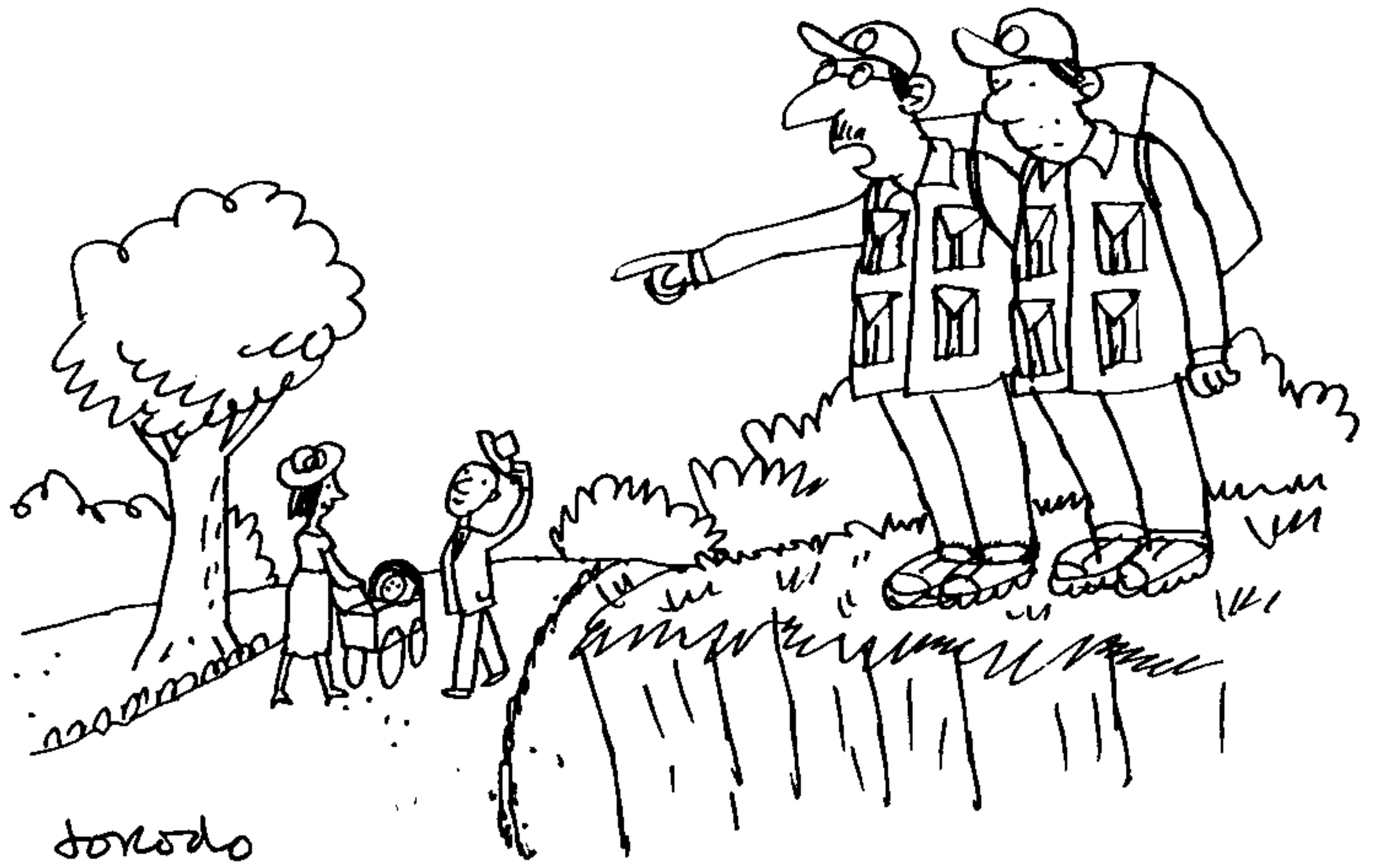
I therefore rang the following organisations in turn, viz. our local police station, the RSPCA, the Defra 'Bird Flu Hotline' and the Royal National Lifeboat Association.

After several hours of pushing buttons, I was at last put through to a human voice. "My name is Vijay" he said, "what time would you like your train?"

It was sometime before I could persuade this charming gentleman, who informed me that he was sitting in Hyderabad (a city I used to know well when I was serving in those parts, although in the days of the Raj we knew as "New Tunbridge Wells") that I did not want information about trains between Crewkerne and Aberdeen. My sole concern was to inform the highest possible authority, as urgently as possible, that Britain was doomed, and that a 20-mile 'exclusion zone' should be enforced round the village of Market Barkworth without delay.

Worse was to come. Later that evening, following a further visit to the Lamb and Flag to enlist the services of a 'village emergency committee', I happened to revisit the 'scene of the crime'. Imagine my astonishment to see huge flocks of diseased birds falling from the sky and covering the ground like snow.

Small wonder that Britain has fared so badly in the Winter Olympics. Sir Herbert Gusset, Dungooglin', Little Wedlock, Salop.



"Look – it's the fabled Lost World"

## 'THIS COURT DOES NOT EXIST,' Claims Historian

by Our Legal Staff Joshua Rosenbeard

Austria, Thursday

**MR DAVID IRVING, the well-known historian, provoked a storm of controversy yesterday when he denied the existence of the three-year prison sentence he had just been handed down by an Austrian court.**

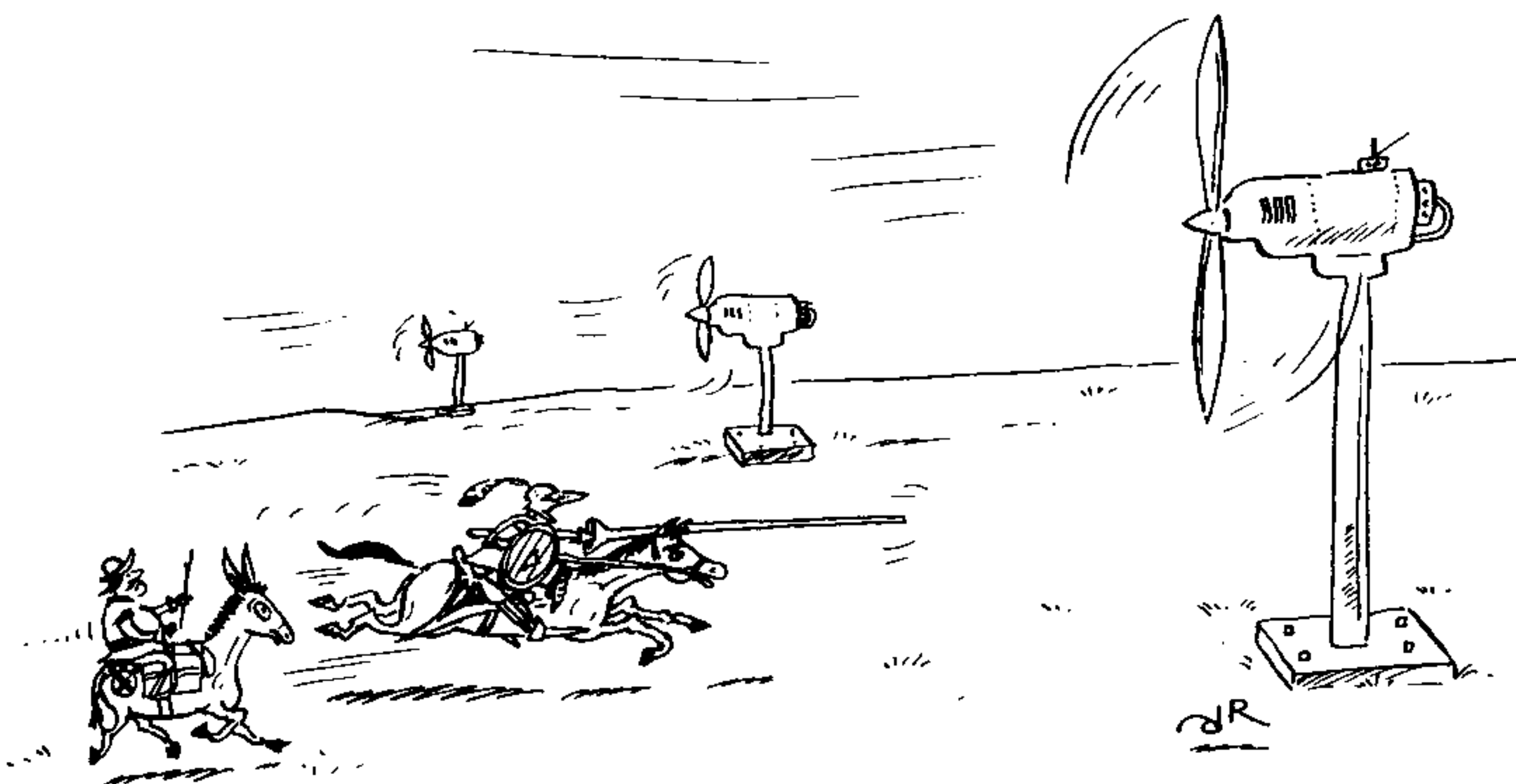
"There are no gaols in Austria," he told waiting newsmen, "and there never have been. It was all made

up by American Jews."

**Irving Berliner**

However, five minutes later, Mr Irving admitted that he had changed his mind, after examining new evidence. "I now accept," he said, "that this prison may well exist, and that millions of innocent historians are being put to death here for telling the truth."

(Full story p. 94)



## THIEVES GET AWAY WITH RECORD HAUL IN DARING HEIST

by Our Crime Staff Phil Swag

**CRIMINALS pretending to be British Gas officials made off with a staggering £1.5 billion yesterday in the most audacious raid Britain has ever seen.**

The thieves, posing as energy suppliers, held the public to ransom and then grabbed an astonishing one-and-a-half billion pounds in cash – in broad daylight.

"It was so simple," said one

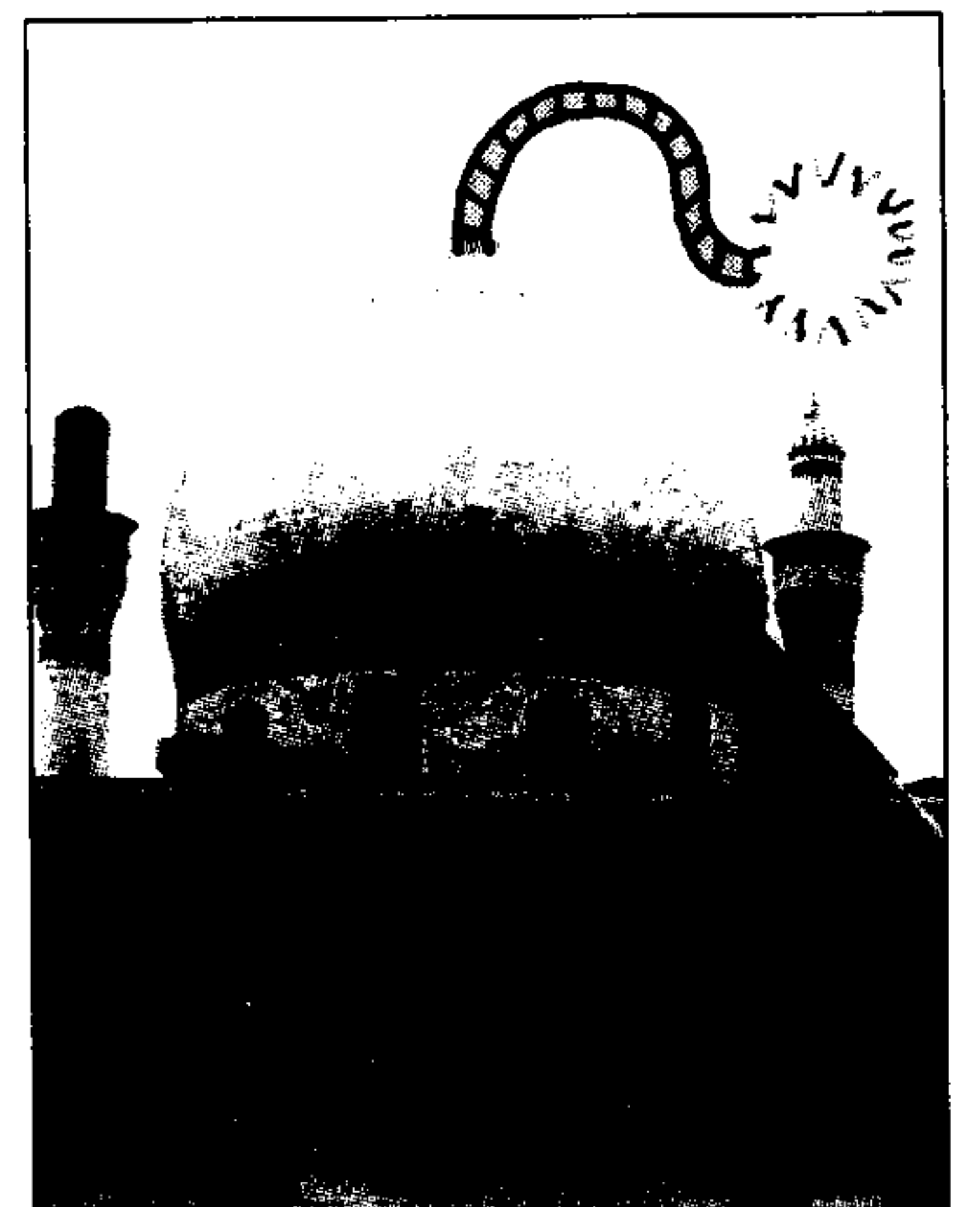
astonished victim. "They sent me a bill and threatened to cut me off if I didn't pay it." He continued, "I've got a wife and kids, so I had no option but to give in to their demands."

The mastermind behind the crime is believed to be an "insider" with detailed knowledge of how a supplier of essential services can charge as much as it likes and get away with it.

**AN ENORMOUS demonstration did not take place today in Trafalgar Square, as thousands of British Muslims did not protest angrily in the streets at the blowing up of a sacred mosque in Samarra in Iraq.**

Not carrying placards saying, "Death to the Bombers", "Behead the Criminals" and "Massacre the Sacrilegious", large numbers of Muslims did not leave their homes at all.

Said one protestor who was not there, "This appalling action offended me so deeply that I stayed in and watched television (cont. p. 94)



Unfunny but accurate cartoon



## IN THE COURTS Regina v. Charles Day 94

Before Mr Justice  
Cocklecarrot

**Sir Ephraim Hugefee Q.C.**

*(acting for His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales):* My Lord, I shall in this case be seeking to show that the action of the Mail on Sunday, in publishing the article "Barmy Chazza Does His Royal Nut", constituted a prima facie instance of breach of confidence, contract, copyright and consanguintendum magnatum as grave as any such case as has ever been presented to the courts of this land.

**Mr Justice Cocklecarrot** *(for it is he):* I shall be the judge of that, Sir Ephraim!

**Sir Ephraim:** I am indebted to Your Lordship. I would ask the court to look at Bundle B,

containing the manuscript of a private diary, written by His Royal Highness and circulated to a few hundred close friends, on the strict condition that the document was to remain confidential until everyone mentioned in the diaries was dead. Indeed, the cover bore the words "For Your Slitty Eyes Only", clearly a jocular reference to the fact that the subject matter of the diary was a vital, top-level diplomatic mission to the People's Republic of China.

**Cocklecarrot:** To what point are you leading, Sir Ephraim? Can we not immediately proceed to the highly sensitive and diplomatically embarrassing bits?

**Sir Ephraim:** I refer to the entry for May 4, in which His Royal Highness writes: "I am on my way to Hong Kong, to give it away to what Pater would call 'our yellow friends'. They seem to have put me in something called 'Club Class' (!), where the chairs are very small. And they've no idea how to do an organic cucumber sandwich. One has to eat it from a kind of plastic box thingie, and there's no one there to open it for you. It really is appalling (!)"

**Cocklecarrot:** Is there much more of this stuff, Sir Ephraim?

**Hugefee:** 942 pages, to be precise, your honour. I now draw your attention to paragraph 47B on page 212, where His Highness begins with the words "It really is appalling".

**Cocklecarrot:** Yes, it really is appalling, isn't it?

*(Court dissolves in appreciative laughter at this sally of judicial wit)*

**Hugefee:** Indeed, Your Honour.

The next thing that His Highness finds appalling is the fact that the Prime Minister seems to have no ideas of his own and has some very second-rate advisers.

"This Blair chap is a perfectly nice fellow. He listened to everything I said, and even nodded once or twice as he closed his eyes to concentrate on what I was telling him about the dangers of GM crops. It really is appalling, I told him."

**Cocklecarrot:** Do we really have to listen to all this "appalling" stuff again?

*(Court is swept by gales of laughter at this further instance of the judge's comedic gift)*

**Hugefee:** M'Lud, I am obliged to spin this out until it is time for luncheon, however thin our case may seem. May I move on to paragraph 78C on page 512?

"We have finally arrived in Hong Kong which, even though it is British, is full of Chinese people (a bit like Soho!). I am here to hand it back to President Chow Mein, or whatever his name is, so that the ghastly Communists can ruin it. Although to be honest, it's almost ruined already, with all its hideous tower blocks ruining the skyline!"

My Lord, I submit that it is not hard to imagine the feelings of my client when he saw these private thoughts blazoned shamelessly across the pages of the gutter press..

**Cocklecarrot:** All this talk of Chinamen has reminded me, Sir Ephraim, that they are currently offering a special Chinese New Year celebratory luncheon at the Garrick Club, and it would therefore be sensible to adjourn at this point, in order not to miss the dim sum.

**Hugefee:** I trust you are not referring to my client as a "dim son", or I shall be forced to sue you as well. Ha, ha, ha... *(No one joins in this laughter.)*

**Cocklecarrot:** I make the jokes around here, Sir Hugefee.

*(Court convulses in sycophantic laughter. National anthem plays, as all exit for luncheon.)*

# SHOCK REVELATIONS OF CHARLES'S TOP AIDE

IN EVIDENCE given by Prince Charles's former Head of Communications and Corporate Affairs, Mr Mark Bollocks, the court heard a series of astounding claims about the heir to the throne and his behaviour which will leave the nation stunned and shocked.

In his affidavit, Mr Bollocks claimed that:

● the Prince of Wales often wrote letters to people, complaining about things

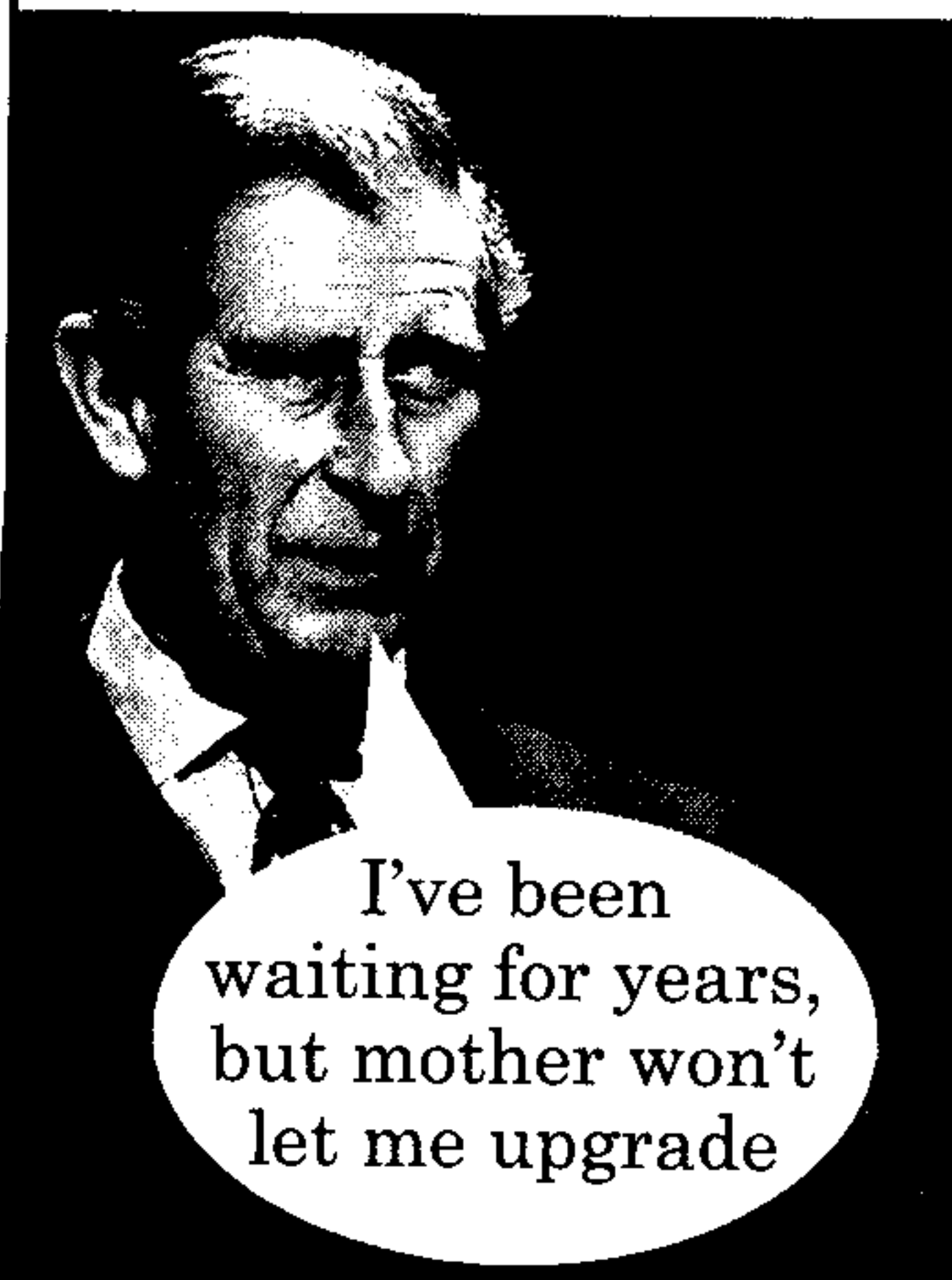
● the Prince had "strong views" about controversial topics such as windfarms, the Prayer Book and modern architecture

● the Prince spent a lot of

time in Scotland and liked wearing a kilt.

*(That's enough shock revelations. Ed.)*

## CHARLES IN 'WRONG SEAT' SHOCK



I've been waiting for years, but mother won't let me upgrade

## The **BLACK** Mail

ON SUNDAY

THE events in a London courtroom this week have starkly revealed that Prince Charles should keep his opinions to himself.

Why did the Prince foolishly choose to go public with his crackpot views by writing them in a private journal?

Surely he must have realised that his personal staff would have no choice but to steal the journal and sell the contents to us for a tidy sum.

The next time the Prince chooses to go public in this fashion, he should perhaps first reflect on the damage such a rash decision will have upon him.

And a last thought. Why on earth should the unelected Prince seek to have any influence over political matters? Politics should be left to the democratically-elected editors of national newspapers, like myself. *(Shurely shome mishtake? Ed.)*

© Blackmail on Sunday

For now, most of his MPs are prepared to suck Mr Cameron and see whether he can deliver success.

Observer

# DIARY

**H**ello everyone! Hello! Hello!

Hello may be a little word – but it means a lot. I employ it regularly.

Some of my Cabinet colleagues add a “How do you do?” or a “How are you?” That is entirely up to them. I salute them for it. I understand their concerns. But, with the greatest respect, they are laying themselves open to abuse. There will always be timewasters who wish to take advantage of a lengthy reply option.

It is up to our highly-trained doctors and nurses to ask people how they are. That is their job. That is their challenge. That is what we pay them to do. And they do it superbly.

I just say Hello, to which a reply is not only unnecessary but also frankly unhelpful. A simple Hello to ordinary men, women and children encourages feelings of inclusivity whilst simultaneously reducing verbal wastage. And that must be a good thing.



PATRICIA HEWITT

well prove contagious?

- Are you becoming a burden not only to yourself but also to your loved ones?
- Is there frankly not much hope for you?

If they answer a positive “Yes” to any of the above, we take them to one side, where it’s nice and warm, and we put a caring arm around them, and we tell them, in a very positive way, that they would be much better off at home. We call it our Rise and Shine Initiative.

**O**ur hard-working teams of doctors and nurses already have quite enough to do without busying themselves over the indiscriminately infirm.

I don’t know if you’ve visited a hospital recently, but I most certainly have. I visited over fifty-three yesterday, via closed-circuit television, and I was frankly shocked to find ill people absolutely everywhere.

Taking up valuable bed-space.

Clogging up our operating tables.

Occupying our corridors.

Wearing out our hard-pressed doctors and nurses.

If we are to achieve much-needed improvements in our hospital services, we must rid ourselves of the frankly patronising idea that ill people in some way need “keeping an eye on”. That attitude is sadly typical of the willingness in some sectors to denigrate invalids as second-class citizens who can’t look after themselves. Much better – not only for them but also for the rest of us – if they wrap up well and stay at home.

The NHS – Putting Healthy People First.

**I**nevitably, some people have their own axes to grind. They grumble about things like MRSA. They complain that people catch it in our hospitals. And they refuse to acknowledge the enormous benefits that have accrued from MRSA.

I understand their concerns. Of course I do. I wouldn’t be human if I didn’t. But first they must get their facts right. I’ve lost count of the leading medical experts who have told me that, when all is said and done, MRSA is a truly marvellous thing, a tremendous boon to hard-working men and women. We now have a waiting list of people who are queuing up to enjoy the benefits MRSA.

That’s not just my belief. Far from it. It’s the belief of hundreds of thousands of senior hospital administrators up and down the country who keep telling me how much they appreciate MRSA, even compared to all of our other splendid new diseases.

**A**nd another thing they tell me, time and time again, is that they wish more hospitals were in the open air. Let’s not waste more and more taxpayers’ money on hard-to-maintain roofs and pricy walls and expensive flooring, they beg me: let’s concentrate our vital resources on accessing all that wonderful fresh air.

I’ve listened to them. And I’m determined to implement their initiatives. So next month, I’m proud to be opening our very first NHS Fresh Air Hospital, conveniently situated for easy access on the grassy area of a major roundabout just off the Chipping Norton ring-road.

Our streets are full of people tripping over on their own and others’ shoelaces. For far too long, undone shoe-laces have been a major cause of accidents, and a needless burden on the NHS. That is why I have asked for CCTV to be installed with immediate effect in over 40,000 ground-level locations around the British Isles. In future, anyone with a loose or undone shoe-lace may expect to face a heavy fine or custodial sentence. Which just leaves me space to remind you that the Clean Underpants Act will soon become law: from the 15th of this month, highly-trained teams of Pant Inspectors, working closely with the police, will be able to stop and search anyone suspected of wearing dirty underpants. Repeat offenders will be fitted with 24-hour Trouser CCTV, an initiative that has been welcomed throughout Britain, and particularly in disadvantaged areas.

As told to

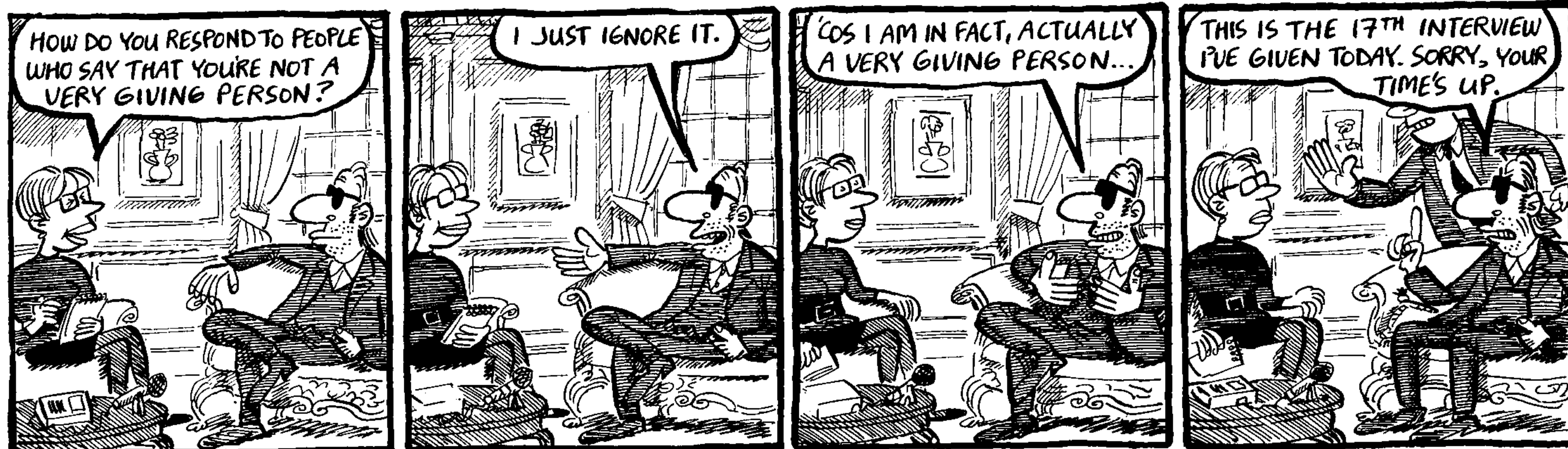
CRAIG BROWN

**A**nd that’s why we also plan to bring in a *basic health threshold* for those who – for whatever reason – wish to become patients in our hospitals. We ask them to answer these four simple questions:

- Are you too ill to walk for yourself?
- Are you suffering from a disease which might

*Celeb*

LIGGER



# Literary Review

## Artificial hip

Ludmila's Broken English  
D.B.C. Pierre  
(Faber, £12.99)

IT WAS the opening day of the 2003 Booker season and the track-side pundits were making their selections. Would this be the year for such spavined nags as Martin Amis's *Yellow Dog* to canter home to glory? Was that grand old stager Margaret Atwood in with a chance? Could that be much-hyped debutant Monica Ali zooming up the rails?

Ah, the embarrassments of prophecy! In the end all bets were off, and *Vernon God Little*, a first novel by a complete unknown, came screeching in from nowhere to scoop the pot, sell a cool three-quarters of a million copies and find itself described by Andrew O'Hagan as "like *The Osbournes* invited *The Simpsons* round for a root beer, and Don DeLillo dropped by to help them write a new song for Eminem".

No doubt about it, *VGL* was as hip a fictional artefact as they come. Even better than the novel's shock value, from the newspaper's point of view – its eponymous teenage hero gets put in the dock for a high school gun massacre – was the deeply enticing figure of the author, D.B.C. Pierre. Old DBC here – the initials stand for "Dirty But Clean" – turned out to be an engaging early fortysomething named Peter Finlay, high old career of debt and delinquency behind him but now resolved to listen only to the seductions of art.

Whatever, DBC trousered a whole wad of cash, stuck around just long enough to collar a Whitbread first novel award, and then lit out for the wilds of County Leitrim and a two-year silence, now broken by the arrival of novel number two.

Anyone expecting a radical departure from the existing template can look the other way. *Ludmila's Broken English* carries on where its effervescent predecessor left off, which is to say that it is high-octane and rambling by turns, seeks to wrest compassion from some very unpromising material and frequently whumps up such a tremendous storm that it forgets those staid old rules about plot, pace and structure altogether.

Gordon and Blair Heath – and it would take an extremely dim reader

not to divine the significance of those names – are a pair of conjoined twins whom the surgeons have decided to separate at the ripe age of 33. Launched into an English metropolis grown even nastier and scarier, the boys are avid to infiltrate "a world churning with opportunity, rowdy with chatter of freedom, globalisation, self-empowerment. Sex."

Several thousand miles distant in a yet more rent-asunder Caucasus, the female lead, oppressed both by the attentions of a libidinous grandfather and, later, the local gauleiters come to investigate his disappearance, has exactly the same desirable target in view. Both sides of the equation, brought together by way of 300 pages' worth of snail-crawl manoeuvring, are vehicles for Pierre's principal novelistic trick: banter.

Gordon – known to his brother as "Bunny" – and Blair go in for amiable *Viz*-style insults ("Would it be on if I jammed a lardon up your bastard chuff?" etc). Ludmila's extended family say things like "Maksimilian. Misery has invited us into the house, it falls to us be astute guests." The novel's core, and its satirical premise, sashays through the door at the moment when the boys discuss the, ah, international situation: "If your type hadn't been so busy rescuing foxes, we could have jumped on the threat while we had a fighting chance."

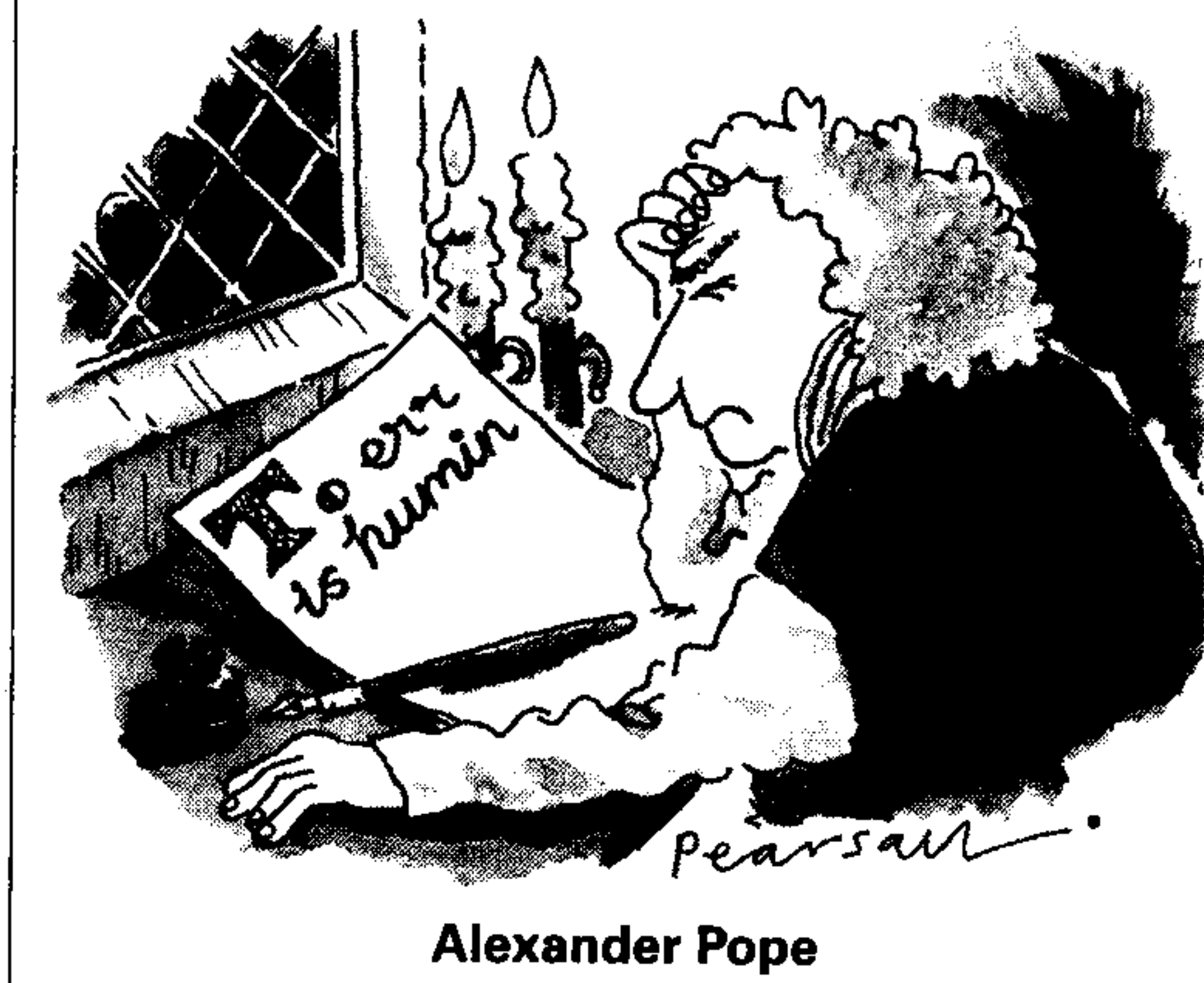
"Jumped on it, eh? Where?"

"Well, I mean. The Middle East, for bloody starters."

"I think we did that, mate, to be honest. I think we poked them with a fucking great stick, then ran back home and expected them to think they'd deserved it for being poor and not letting their women flash their arses on the street."

Oh dear. Two points should be made about *Ludmila's Broken English*. The first is that it is not so much a novel as a *piece of writing*. The other is that its no doubt colossal sales will reflect its appeal to people who would like to read a serious novel about contemporary "issues" but don't actually know what one looks like. Meanwhile, the personal side of the D.B.C. Pierre phenomenon remains intensely mysterious. It wouldn't surprise me in the least if the next set of press revelations were to reveal that he bought the manuscript off a bloke he met in the pub, or had it dictated to him by a gang of aliens while being gang-probed in their space capsule.

## FIRST DRAFTS



Alexander Pope

## BOOKS AND BOOKMEN

■ REVIEWING Richard Ellmann's life of Oscar Wilde for the *Sunday Times* way back in 1987, Roger Lewis infuriated Ellmann's family by writing about his motor neurone disease. Ellmann's daughter Lucy bombarded the *Sunday Times* with complaints.

Lewis compounded the offence in 2002 with his biography of Anthony Burgess, which began with a description of the Ellmann house in Oxford where he first encountered Burgess. Richard Ellmann served "a meal of fetching gin and tonics" accompanied by a "plastic tub of what might have been called guacamole". It was a squalid place, the kitchen sink "clogged with tea leaves and his daughters' draining knickers".

Lo and behold, Lucy Ellmann has just published a novel, *Doctors and Nurses*, in which the chief villain is called Roger Lewis – "a name full of anti-climax, a name full of COL-LAPSE, the sexual explicitness of ROGER, so quickly refuted by the loose limp LEWIS". He turns out to be a serial killer of the Harold Shipman school.

After a complaint from the real Lewis, Ellmann's publishers at Bloomsbury are now offering to change the name in the paperback. Lewis has proposed, for no discernible reason, that the character be renamed Jonathan Coe.

■ GREAT men are often ahead of their times, and this certainly seems to have been true of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43BC) – at least if online bookshop Amazon.co.uk is to be believed.

A recent mailout to customers announced that "A room without books, DVDs, video games, music

and electronics is like a body without a soul' – the wise words of ancient Roman statesman Cicero. With hundreds of great new products at low prices, it's never been easier to give your room some soul."

■ IN 2003 Penguin released the paperback of Anita Brookner's *The Rules of Engagement*, complete with the following quote on the cover: "Splendid, melancholy... an

unflinching examination of the manoeuvres [sic] of the heart – *Spectator*". Several readers spotted the mistake and alerted the publishers – but undeterred, Penguin (publisher of among others *The Penguin Writers' Guides: Improve Your Spelling* and a new edition of *Dr Johnson's Dictionary*) this month published Brookner's latest, *Leaving Home*, with the same mis-spelt review on the back cover.

'Bookworm'

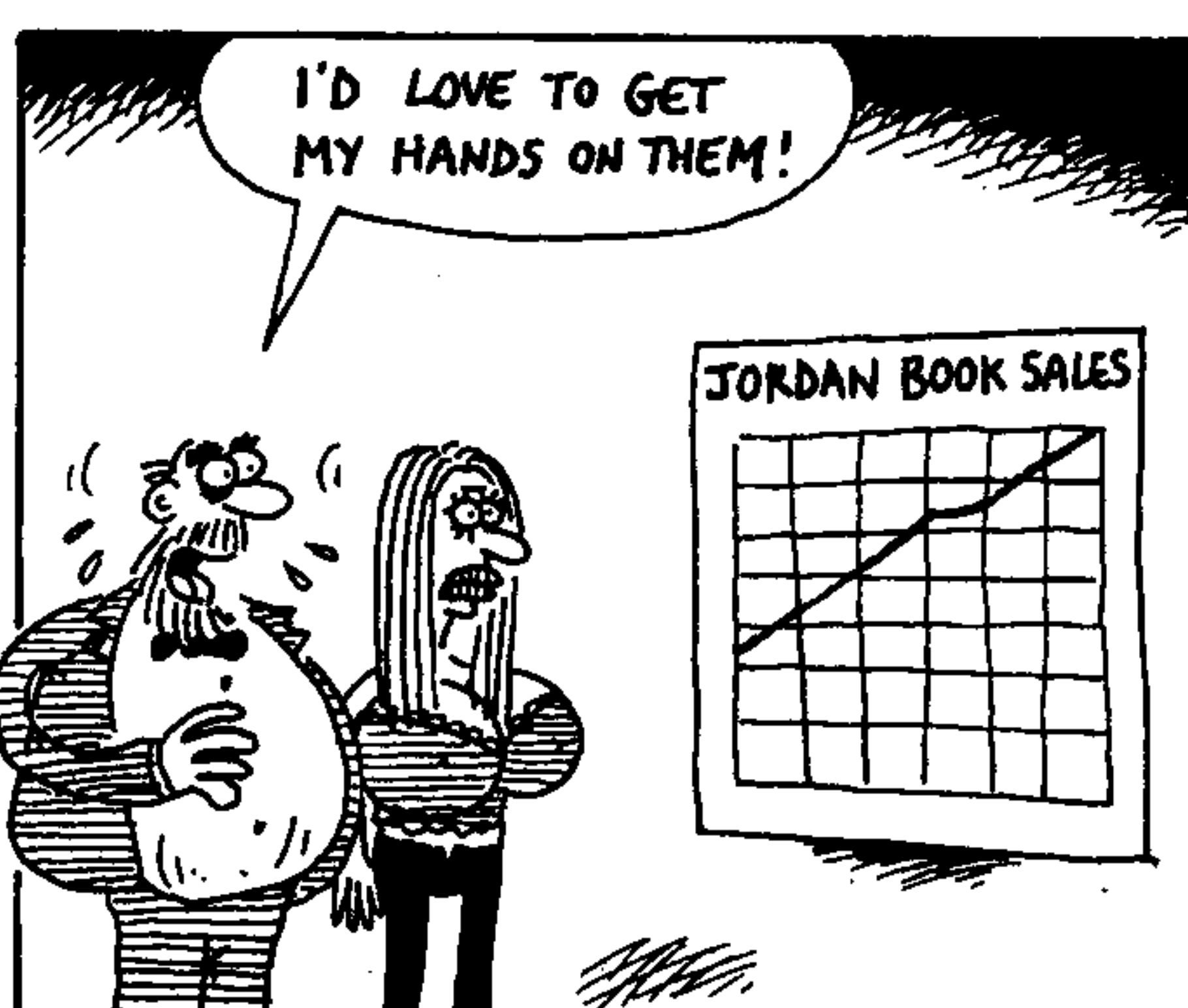
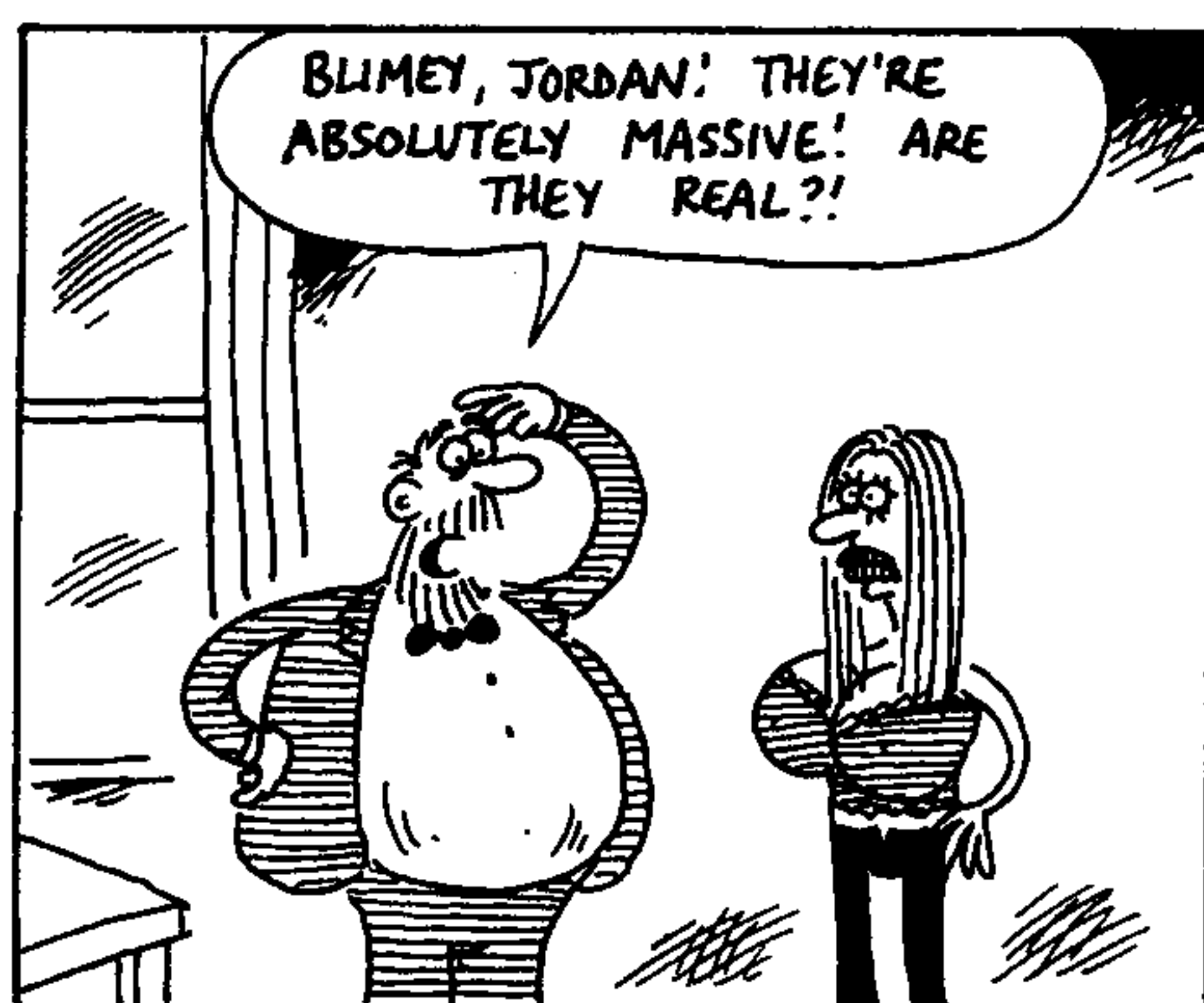
## LIBRARY NEWS

■ PLANS to tackle the increasing shortage of shelving space in university libraries by creating a single national collection of academic journals create the risk that everything could be lost in fire, flood or other catastrophes, and ruin the joy of browsing, academics and librarians have warned.

A National Research Reserve is proposed in a report on "optimising storage" published in December by the British Library and the Consortium of Research libraries. Researchers would be able to visit the reserve or have documents delivered to their own institution when required, rather than keeping all copies of journals at every university.

The most outspoken opponents of the idea have been library chiefs at Oxford University, one of the UK's four copyright libraries, who have said they will not participate. Ronald Milne, acting director of university library services, has warned that having only one collection would put the nation's printed heritage at serious risk in any future disaster. A number of senior professors have backed his stance, perhaps recalling the fate of the Great Library of Alexandria – or more recently the fates of the Prague archives in the floods of 2002 and Iraq's National Library, ransacked by looters and arsonists in 2003.

Oxford's resistance is under pressure from other directions, however, as the university announced last week that it needed to cut £2m from its library budget, with more than 100 jobs at risk in the university's 80 libraries. Meanwhile, plans for a huge £27m new store to contain 8m books in Osney Mead are opposed by local environmentalists who say it would ruin the landscape.



# Life in shambles

**Pete Doherty – Last of the Rock Romantics**

Alex Hannaford

(Ebury Press, £16.99)

**M**OST comment about the musician Pete Doherty pays scant attention to his music, so in a blatant bid for controversy it might pay to start with that.

With his bands The Libertines and latterly Babyshambles, 26-year-old Doherty has now released three albums in 2002, 2004 and 2005. The first two, most would agree, were pretty good. The third, by general consensus, fairly dire. Similarly, The Libertines gained their reputation primarily as a bravura live act and then, through a series of cancelled gigs, on-stage scraps and rank bad performances, became a freak show. Babyshambles at Glastonbury last year were aural mud.

So if you're interested in Doherty the musician, the story is quite simple: likeable boy from a middle-class background who always had a way with words moves to London, starts a skiffle band with his friend Carl Barat, and eventually they are signed. The reason they were signed, as so often in music, was because of felicitous timing. In 2001, Britpop had fizzled out, dance music and DJs were going the same way and a new wave of American guitar bands, led by The Strokes, were making rock cool again. At the same time, with a dearth of British

guitar music, the NME was going down the pan. The UK record industry needed a British Strokes and the NME needed to sell some copies. The Libertines had changed their sound from back-room skiffle to rock, and were apt to behave badly in front of journalists so they ticked both boxes. This subtle collusion has worked wonders for the industry and the NME... but it may end up killing Pete Doherty.

Because the next, and probably final part of the story, is that The Libertines got in to hard drugs, for which Doherty turned out to have an almighty predilection. The more drugs Doherty has taken the worse his music has become.

Evidently, this is not the story that Alex Hannaford chooses to tell, because admitting that your subject is a cliché – another self-destructive addict created, then ingested, by the industry machine – rather pulls the rug from beneath your incisive portrait. Much better to “explore the myth”, as he puts it, and in so doing why not make the myth a little bit more titillating? Doherty is thus labelled, “Last of the Rock Romantics”, even though there will assuredly be plenty more self-styled “rock romantics” to come. In the annals of popular music there have been plenty before, after all.

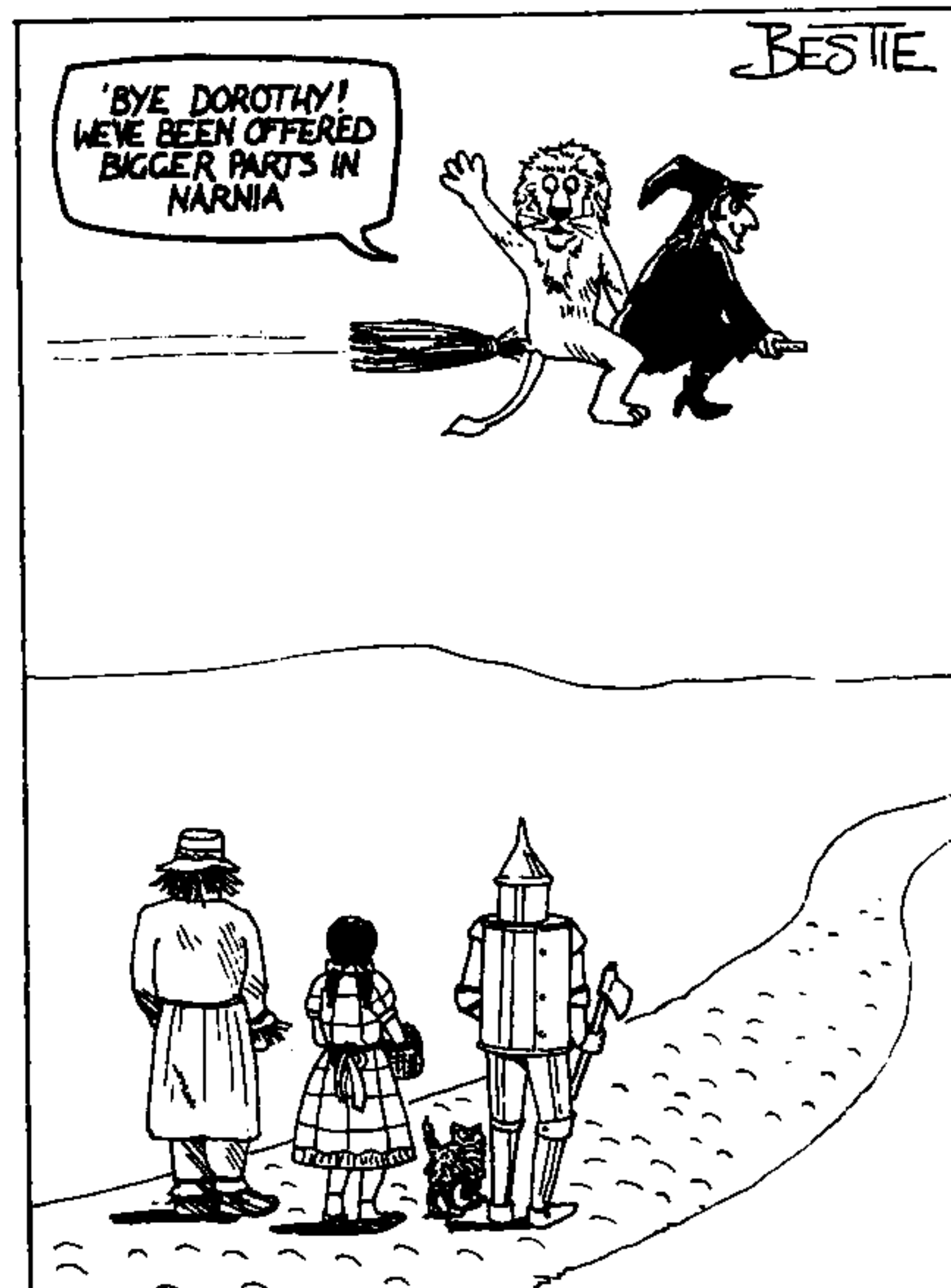
Having decided that his man is to be granted a full biography, Hannaford cannot afford to concede that Doherty can be anything other than the presiding genius of his age, and so he dresses up what amount to slender achievements in a quilt of magniloquent tosh. We are given a potted history of romanticism conveniently spun so that Pete Doherty

becomes the heir of Blake and Byron. Romantic poets used opiates, Doherty uses opiates, ergo Doherty is a romantic poet, runs the sophistry. Doherty certainly has the drug use licked, but Hannaford forgets that the romantic poets produced romantic poetry, whereas Doherty's magnum opus thus far is called “Fuck Forever”. It probably wouldn't have made it in to *Lyrical Ballads*.

One reason Hannaford dwells on the romantic context, the “outlaw myth”, the “Rimbaldian script” and several other spurious explanations for why a drug addict behaves like a drug addict might be because he is lacking any other material in what is described as an “in-depth biography.” Doherty is only 26 so his CV is necessarily a bit spartan, but there is no interview with Doherty himself, no notes or index from which to examine Hannaford's sources and most of the quotes appear to come from newspaper cuts. Hannaford's own interviews appear to consist of one school friend, a few former managers and – coup of coups – a PR lackey who once beat a rat-faced Doherty at pool.

Britain's love affair with the romantic novel appears to be over, with library figures showing borrowers turning to crime.

Daily Telegraph



THE LION THE WITCH AND THE WAGE RISE

## LUVVIES

What Newton has learnt from Lorena [her cleaner] is never-ending: “About life, she has taught me resilience; about love, that it doesn't need words; about cleaning, so much! She does these fancy corners on our sheets. And the way she stacks towels makes me moist.”

THANDIE NEWTON  
Sunday Times 'Style'  
Magazine

Submitted by Simon Atkinson.

I once made Pseuds Corner in Private Eye talking lyrically in an interview about the skills required to do an ad voice-over, but I still maintain it is a rare and precious thing to be able to invest a commercial for a carpet warehouse in Croydon with pathos, passion and meaning, and all in 29½ seconds.

ALEXEI SAYLE  
New Statesman



It feels like arriving at one of those country house parties that happen only in other people's lives – every guest is a friend of the owner, and if there isn't someone you immediately want to talk to about, you're quite happy just to lounge back, gin martini in hand, and be amused by their dashing eccentricity or sparkling repartee.

Except these aren't people, they are wines.

VICTORIA MOORE  
'One for the Rack', Guardian Weekend

Cathy's shocking affirmation of her relationship with Heathcliff – something far beyond mere loyalty – lies at the heart of Wuthering Heights. “Nelly, I am Heathcliff,” she says. “He's always, always in my mind, not as a pleasure, any more

## Pseuds Corner

than I am a pleasure to myself, but as my own being.”

This extraordinary statement is the daily bread of the football supporter. A football supporter sings: “I'm City till I die! I'm City till I die!” I am City, a loyalty that goes so deep the edges of individuality become blurred...

Cathy had the right words. The love of footballers for clubs is like the foliage of the woods that time will change, as winter changes trees. But the supporters' love for a club resembles the eternal rocks beneath, a source of little visible delight, but necessary.

SIMON BARNES  
The Times

It really irritates me when people rubbish J.K. Rowling and Harry Potter and says [sic] it's all derivative. The Order of the Phoenix was actually all about counter-terrorism...

Liberty director SHAMI CHAKRABARTI  
Observer

It's a perfect metaphor for our consumption of your beauty – as the ice evaporates, it will be released as vapour into the art gallery, and people will breathe you in. There's something so Eucharistic about it.

Artist MARC QUINN on his ice sculpture of Kate Moss,  
The Times

## Pseuds Educational

Dear Head Teacher,  
Extension of the Provider Gateway

I am writing to inform you about the extension of the Provider Gateway to new groups of providers and the introduction of the value added (VA)/distance travelled (DT) data on the Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT). We are aiming for this to take place within the next 10 working days and user-approvers will be informed once the Gateway is live together with information about how to access the Gateway. I will ask user-approvers to inform the heads of their respective organisations when the Gateway goes live...

... The extension will also include the delivery of the LAT through the Gateway which will provide value added and – except for schools – distance travelled data for 16-19 year olds. This software will give access to VA and DT reports for 16-19 learners for the pilot year of this new national measure. VA and DT both measure learners' progress taking into account their prior attainment, with VA covering graded level 3 qualifications and DT other qualifications at levels 1, 2 and upgraded level 3. Further details on the use of VA and DT data can be found in the Quality Improvement Pack document which can be accessed via the staff development resources link on [www.LSC.gov.uk/nms](http://www.LSC.gov.uk/nms) <<http://www.LSC.gov.uk/nms>>... At the same time we will introduce a new user-approver system, for both existing and future users. This will enable the user-approvers to create users within their own organisations with differing rights of access...

Letter from Paul Martinez, Group Manager,  
New Measures of Success, Provider Gateway

CONTRIBUTORS: David French, Nigel Longhurst, David Laffin, C. Palmer.

£10 paid for all entries

# IN THE BACK

## EXPERT WITNESSES

### Roy of the ravers

**MR Justice Collins' judgment reversing the decision of the General Medical Council to strike off Professor Sir Roy Meadow (pictured) will be felt far beyond the controversial "cot death" murder trials at which Meadow has given expert testimony.**

The judge has removed the power of any professional body to guarantee and enforce standards – unless it can be proved that the expert was acting in "bad faith" or unless a judge refers the expert to his or her professional body. Collins' judgment can only be described as a victory for commonsense if you ignore the evidence, the context, Sir Roy's peculiar track record, the statistics, paediatrics, genetics and the presumption of innocence.

The GMC's charge against Meadow, the first president of the Royal College of Paediatricians and the discoverer of Munchausen's Syndrome By Proxy, was not that he got one statistic wrong in good faith, as Judge Collins believes. It was that at the trial of Sally Clark (who was jailed in 1999 for killing her two sons, three-month-old Christopher and two-month-old Harry), he wrongly cherry-picked from a study the single most damning statistic – "a 73 million to one" chance of having two sudden infant deaths – while keeping back from the jury the main finding of the study: that once you suffer one cot death, the chances of a second are actually more likely.

Meadow also failed to declare his lack of expertise as a statistician. And to compound matters, the "73 million to one" figure arrived at by simply multiplying the chance of having one cot death (at the time put at one in 8,543) by the same figure is in any event wrong because one should not square odds and nor should one apply general population statistics to individual cases – all of which the "expert" Meadow did.

On the eve of Mrs Clark's double murder trial (she was eventually freed by the courts in 2003), Sir Roy faxed the police a table from the study showing the "73m to one" figure – but not the accompanying health warning text, which painted a very different picture and warned: "This does not take account of possible familial incidence of factors" – that is, genetic or environmental factors. The charge against Meadow was that he loaded the evidence against the cot death mother in the



dock while ignoring his duty as an expert to present the full picture, even when it was inconvenient and undermined his own evidence.

In his expert statement for the court, written earlier, Meadow had put the double cot death chance at one in a million; but again, contrary to good expert guidance and practice, he was unable to produce the raw data on which this figure was based. No scientist would be able to get a paper containing such statistics published without proper scrutiny and peer review – yet they can it seems be produced to a court where a mother or father faces a life sentence when accused of the most terrible crime.

The GMC said it had accepted that Sir Roy's failures were neither "calculated" nor "wilful". It added: "However, your misguided belief in the truth of your arguments, maintained throughout the period in questions and indeed throughout this inquiry, is both disturbing and serious."

In the opening sentence of his judgment, Judge Collins proclaims that Meadow is an eminent paediatrician. In fact science has junked Sir Roy's Munchausen's Syndrome By Proxy, which has no laboratory science behind it and doesn't merit a proper entry in either of world medicine's two diagnostic bibles. Even the Department of Health has dumped the title.

Science has also junked Meadow's Law: that until proven otherwise, one cot death is a tragedy, two is suspicious and three is murder. Genetics too makes a nonsense of Meadow, who shredded his database before the Sally Clark case began.

Sir Roy's apparent eminence thus seems to rest on legal findings, and here again Mr Justice Collins gives Meadow the benefit of the doubt. Meadow has given reports in 10 criminal cases, always effectively for the prosecution and against the defendant. This 100 percent siding against the accused shows, critics say, someone who tends to see child abuse wherever he looks. In four of those cases – those of Sally Clark, Angela Cannings, Donna Anthony and Margaret Smith – the appeal court found that there had been miscarriages of justice. In a fifth case, that of Trupti Patel, the jury dismissed the Crown's evidence, including that of Sir Roy. Appeals are in the pipeline for two more cases.

It was clear from the GMC's criticism of Sir Roy's continuing misguided beliefs that the panel had these other matters in mind – even if Mr Justice Collins did not. It was precisely because Sir Roy was regarded as leader in his field, that he should have taken meticulous care in such a sensitive area. Yet he had failed to keep abreast of his own field of expertise, had strayed outside his area without revealing it and had given misleading evidence. His errors "compounded by repetition over a considerable period of time" were what led to his sanction.

Mr Justice Collins' overriding concern was that doctors would be discouraged from giving expert opinion if it could lead to disciplinary action, even if given in good faith. But any expert giving opinion in which could lead to wrongful conviction should surely be prepared to have that opinion rigorously tested – and especially when life sentences are at stake. Those who can support what they say with data, research and evidence will have nothing to fear.

## TAX CREDITS

### Dawn chorus of disapproval

**PAYMASTER-General Dawn Primarolo's claim that it was taking five weeks on average to solve disputes in the £1.9bn overpayment of tax credits fiasco, had many Inland Revenue victims spluttering in derision.**

Anxious families facing sudden and huge claims for repayment of credits have spent weeks and months ringing useless helplines and writing futile letters to try to avoid hardship. John Ozimek, a self-employed systems analyst and father of three from Peterborough, was so desperate to extricate himself from Gordon Brown's failing system he declared that his likely joint earnings with his wife would be more than £97,000 in the 2004-2005 tax year (they wouldn't be anywhere near that) simply to guarantee that they no longer qualified for the wretched credits. Amazingly the Inland Revenue decided Mr Ozimek and his family were still entitled to more than £500 – which it now wants back.

The Treasury was supposed to write-off overpayments made due to its own mistakes. But in Mr Ozimek's case it is refusing to do so, claiming that the figures shown on the photocopies of documents he sent them "do not match the figures held on our records at the time". This means that either Mr Ozimek somehow doctored the papers or that the system is seriously flawed. The *Eye* has seen the originals sent out by the Inland Revenue on 24 July 2004 and, if forged, they would have to be highly sophisticated. This suggests the IR has another major glitch in its troubled works – which may explain why Ms Primarolo can't meet her own four-week target of resolving overpayment disputes.

Since tax credits were introduced in 2003, as well as the massive £1.9bn overpayment (of which £700m has been recovered) the system has been targeted by sophisticated fraudsters. The £15m identified so far as having been paid to criminals who have stolen the identities of thousands of workers at the Department of Work and Pensions and Network Rail is believed to be the tip of a very large iceberg. Unfortunately, victims of the scam have also been unable to extricate themselves from the tax credit overpayment nightmare. One civil servant told the *Eye* how he received a letter on 25 January telling him a false tax credit claim had been made using his name and insurance number. But he was also told that as it had been intercepted, he need not worry. A week later he received a demand for tax credit overpayments of £2,000!

When he called a revenue helpline, he was told: "Don't worry, just rip up the demand". This was hardly reassuring – especially, a few hours later, a colleague who was also a victim of identity theft, phoned for help only to find the line had been taken out of use.

## DEFENCE CONTRACTS

### Boeing for a song

**ARMED FORCES**  
**A** Minister Adam



Ingram said he expected "effective support" and "reduced costs" from a massive contract with Boeing to maintain Britain's Chinook helicopters. The deal is worth £200m for the first five years, and will run for a further 29. Costs could easily exceed £1bn.

The Ministry of Defence told *Private Eye* that Boeing was awarded the deal without competition as this was "very much a partnering contract". The MoD is showing faith in its partner even though Boeing contracts haven't always worked well in the past. Last year the Commons defence select committee revealed that the SAS's eight Chinook mark 3 helicopters, bought from Boeing 10 years

previously for £260m, were grounded. They can't fly in cloudy weather because of difficulties with their computers which will cost another £127m to fix. Neither the MoD nor the MPs could decide who was responsible for cock-up.

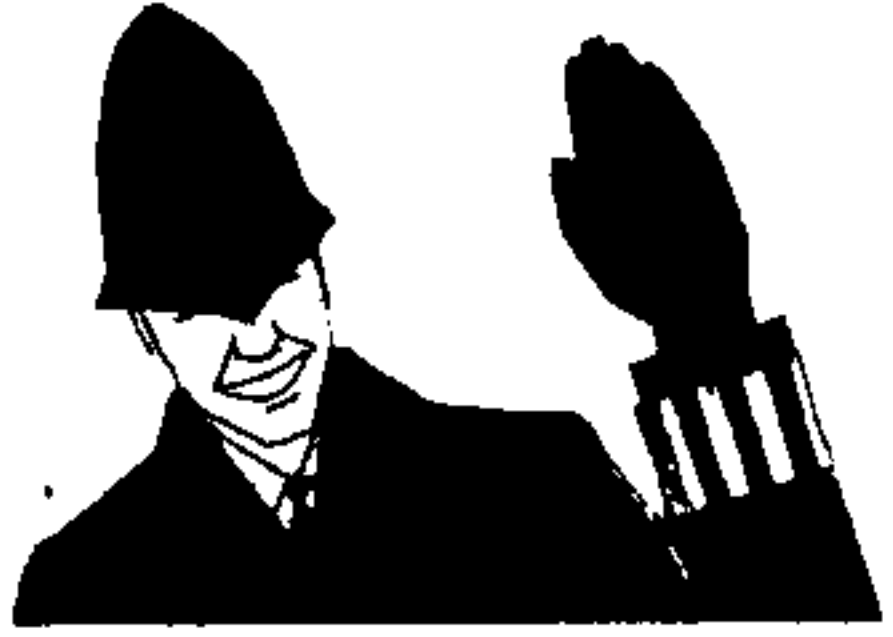
MPs were much clearer about who was to blame for the failures of a training contract for Apache helicopters. ATIL, a consortium of Westland and Boeing, won a PFI contract to train pilots in 1998 and the select committee found the contract wasted £24m. A training simulator was delivered so late that the lack of trained pilots meant 40 of the 57 Apaches were put in storage.

Boeing was also lead bidder for a £13bn aircraft refuelling contract, the MoD's largest "PPP" deal. However, it was knocked out of the running after a

similar scheme in the US fell apart in a massive scandal. The US refuelling plan was heavily criticised for over pricing, and two Boeing executives ended up in prison after it emerged that the firm had recruited a former US Air Force official who leaked it other bidders' secrets. Shortly after the American scandal Boeing was knocked out of the British competition, although the government and company maintained the two contracts were unrelated.

The MoD told *Private Eye* that performance indicators and other measures would ensure there was value for money in the Chinook deal, and that while there had been no competition there was a "value for money" assessment that led to a cut in price during negotiations. Boeing was chosen for its expertise as it manufactures Chinooks.

## POLICE 5



## Caldwell that ends well

**M**ANCHESTER's Detective Chief Inspector Kenny Caldwell (see *Eyes passim*) is living up to his non-stick reputation. The Crown Prosecution Service has decided that though he was slated by a judge for withholding evidence and lying during a murder trial, he will not face criminal charges. Neither will four other officers blamed for the collapse of a trial which lasted eight months and cost taxpayers £5m.

While the other four will have to wait to learn if they keep their jobs or face other disciplinary action, Caldwell of course was allowed to retire with his £28,000-a-year plus pension in tact. Even though a high court judge later found the decision to allow him to retire while he was under investigation for perverting the course of justice "unlawful", the ruling fell short of ordering Greater Manchester police to reinstate him.

Caldwell was blamed for concealing crucial documents that pointed to suspects other than the seven men who were in the dock accused of murdering drug dealer David Barnshaw. Barnshaw had been kidnapped and made to swallow petrol before being burned alive in the back of his car in September 1999.

When the 2001 trial at Preston crown court collapsed, the judge said failings by Caldwell and two other officers, DI David Smith and DI Darren Shenton, were so serious he was referring the matter to the director of public prosecutions. Caldwell, the judge suggested, was guilty of "extremely serious, deliberate and dishonest conduct". Smith was accused of not telling the truth about an informer and Shenton was "grossly negligent" for failing to pass on crucial intelligence.

The CPS announcement that there was insufficient evidence to bring criminal charges against any of them brings to an end a two-and-a-half year investigation into the affair. Smith, who is also facing investigation over evidence he gave the Shipman inquiry, remains suspended on full pay, while Shenton is on normal duties, pending a decision by the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Greater Manchester Police over any disciplinary action. The two other officers have not been identified.

At the time of the Barnfield debacle, it also emerged that Caldwell was at the centre of another investigation into perverting the course of justice centred on Stockport CID. In order to make their crime figures look good, officers were persuading villains to admit to crimes they hadn't committed. That way the police could log the crimes as solved, putting them down as "TICs" (to be taken into consideration) when actually the real villains went free. In October 2003 Caldwell was given "words of advice" – a ticking off – for his part in a scam which fooled the police hierarchy and ministers into believing Stockport a model of efficiency.

During the investigation it was put to Caldwell by senior investigating officers that: "Under your command, your officers have shown a total and complete disregard for the laws and procedures that govern how the police service should operate. There appears within that team a complete lack of honesty and integrity. The actions of your staff have precluded any thorough investigation and the true offenders will never face justice... you and all your staff have effectively perverted the course of justice in excess of 600 occasions."

Caldwell denied any knowledge of what his officers were up to and said the only thing he was guilty of was working too hard.

## Sore loser

**P**OLICE constables are sensitive souls these days – at least if Met officer PC Gary O'Connell is anything to go by.

He was one of a group of officers who stopped former banker Nicky Samengo-Turner under anti-terrorist legislation and then charged him with possession of a bladed weapon (actually his "multi-tool", complete with screw driver and bottle opener) and a collapsible baton, which he kept for self-defence. A jury at Southwark crown court threw the case out last August.

Mr Samengo-Turner, 51, had never been in trouble with the police before and decided to write about his experiences with PC Knacker in both the *Spectator* and *Evening Standard*. This clearly irked O'Connell, who has instructed the Police Federation's favourite lawyers, Russell, Jones and Walker.

A letter from the firm to Mr Samengo-Turner's former lawyer indicates that among the matters which have upset PC O'Connell are claims that he couldn't use the tape-recorder and was one of several scruffy, badly led and ill-mannered officers at Charing Cross police station; there were also Mr Samengo-Turner's more serious questions about the PC's temper and competence.

Mr Samengo-Turner believes the threat of a defamation action now only adds injury to insult. After all, at the end of his *Standard* article he said he planned to drop a complaint for alleged assault that he had made against PC O'Connell "in the spirit in which I hoped to be treated by him."

Curiously, the letter from Russell Jones and Walker suggests that O'Connell's claims that Mr Samengo-Turner's articles are "inaccurate, misleading and highly damaging to his reputation" is borne out by the CCTV footage of events in the custody suite at the time. Yet when Mr Samengo-Turner's defence team made a formal request for the footage, it was told by both police and the CPS that it didn't exist!

## Dai another day

**N**ORTH Wales Police chief constable Richard Brunstrom told his staff on 17 February that they would be "crackers" to agree to become part of an all-Wales police force, as the Home Secretary has demanded, while the chair of the local police authority has described the plan as "a shambles".

Presumably they fear that merging with the other three forces in the country would threaten the efficiency of North Wales' finest – as demonstrated the previous week when officials at Prestatyn magistrates' court called in police to deal with a defendant who was behaving in a drunk and disorderly manner. It took officers an hour and ten minutes to arrive – even though Prestatyn's police station is in the same building as the court.

In January the force apologised to a 43-year-old man who had attempted a citizen's arrest after three youths vandalised his wife's car but subsequently spent ten minutes being attacked by them. Where did this happen? On the stairs outside the entrance to Holyhead police station...

## AIRFIELD DEVELOPMENT

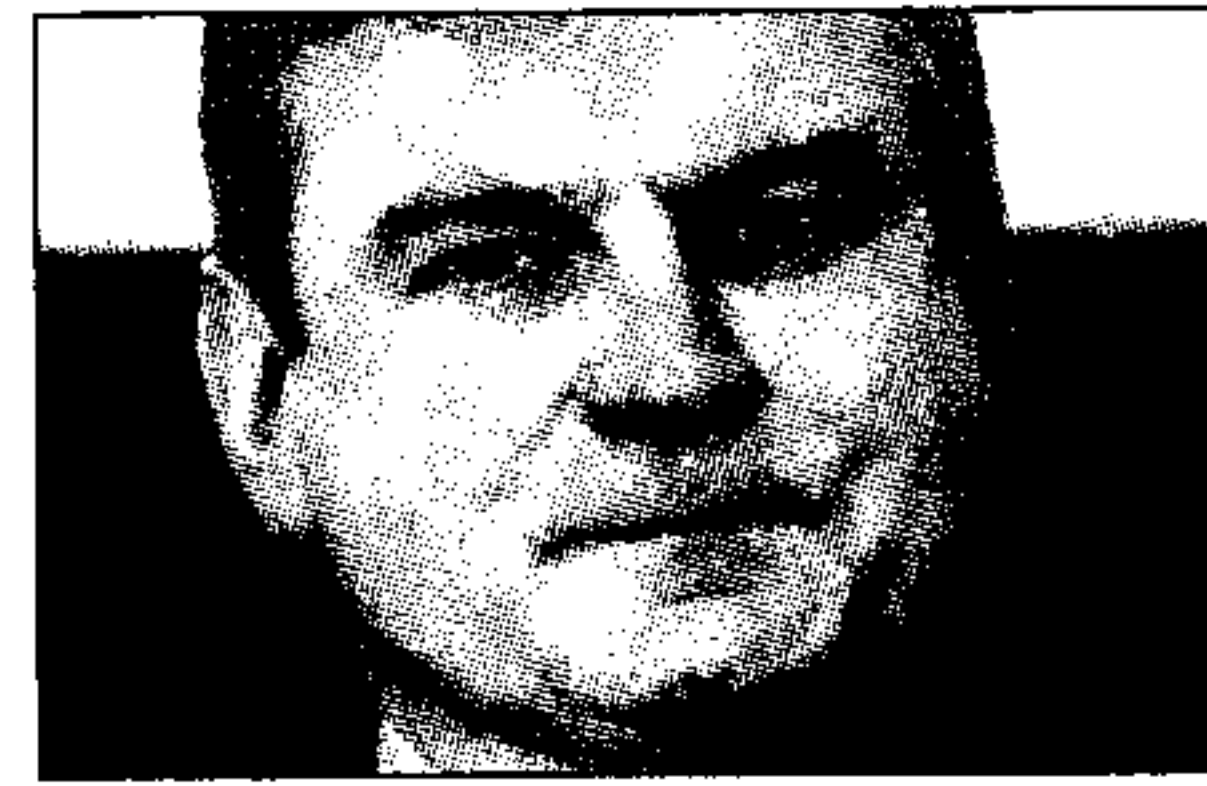
## Developers at 3 o'clock

**H**OUSING developers' love of the large open spaces provided by airfields has already been seen at Kenley and North Weald (*Eye* 1150). But until now flyers have been protected by legislation that stops airfields being designated as "brownfield" land just because they have a few hangers and offices.

Planning Policy Guidance 3 says that "where the footprint of a building only occupies a proportion of a site, of which the remainder is open land (such as at an airfield or a hospital), the whole site should not normally be developed to the boundary of the curtilage."

Of course developers want the whole lot, so John

## PFI



## Adrian mole

**H**OW did London and Continental Railways (LCR), the Channel tunnel rail link owner and Eurostar operator, become such an enticing prospect for would-be purchaser Sir Adrian Montague (pictured) and his backers?

Back in 1998 it was another rail basket case; and the government, in the words of the National Audit Office, "seriously considered abandoning the project and taking Eurostar UK, along with the intellectual and other assets of LCR, back into the public sector".

But at the same time "new" Labour, desperate to invest without borrowing the money itself, was doing whatever it could to make the private finance initiative attractive to a then unenthusiastic industry; and if it wanted sceptical businessmen to sign up to its plans, the last thing it needed after only a year in power was to nationalise something. So the decision on what to do with LCR was handed to the body set up by Paymaster-General Geoffrey Robinson to promote private finance: the Treasury PFI Taskforce, under its new chief executive, one Adrian Montague.

The predictable result of Montague's review, committing the taxpayer without showing up in Gordon Brown's figures, was to give the troubled company public guarantees: not just for its multi-billion pound debts, but also for cost overruns on building the second stage of the rail link and lack of passenger demand on Eurostar – all on top of the original grants from the Tory government.

Now, nearly eight years on and with construction of the rail link nearing completion thanks to taxpayer support spanning a decade, Montague and friends at investment bank Goldman Sachs can spot the rich pickings on offer, not least in the shape of land owned by LCR in east London which, post-Olympic bid victory, looks very valuable.

Back in October 1998, Robinson and Montague were keen to boast of the LCR restructuring plan as one of their taskforce's early successes in private finance. "We are well on our way to seeing a new type of commodity product ..." promised Robinson. How true as the man who did so much to convert public assets into "commodity products" prepares to snaffle up one of his own creations.

Last week's announcement by the Office of National Statistics that LCR should after all be treated as part of the public sector conveniently gave Transport Secretary Alistair Darling the opportunity to force its sale to Labour's old mate Montague. Or, looked at another way, Labour's old mate Montague has stepped up just as the ONS decision forces LCR's debts unflatteringly on to the government's books – and a sale to Sir Adrian would take them off again. Conspiracy theorists can take their pick.

Prescott's department has obligingly removed that section from the new Planning Policy Statement 3 that went to consultation in December. The change isn't even contained in the paper itself, but eagle-eyed pilots spotted it in the small print defining brownfield land. Groups such as the Popular Flying Association and the British Gliding Association were busily rallying members to respond in time for the close of consultation on 27 February, but they hardly have the lobbying power as the big builders.

If the change does go ahead, many flying and gliding clubs fear that the owners of airfields will be unable to resist the riches their land is suddenly worth to developers.



## In the City

**I**TALIAN magistrates aren't the only investigators who have had reason to question the explanations given by the investigation-prone David Mills regarding his relationship with Italy's prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Three years ago the Serious Fraud Office too was less than satisfied with certain answers provided by the Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell's lawyer husband to its inquiries on behalf of the Italians. So much so that there were those inside the SFO who discussed whether Mills should even be prosecuted.

Mills had been questioned in 2003 by the SFO, which in such circumstances usually uses its unique Section 2 powers that remove the right to silence. He had also been quizzed in 1996.

Some of Mills' 2003 testimony was allegedly contradicted by evidence provided to the SFO by the Italians, and also by former Mills employees and associates who were also compelled to testify.

Mills has always publicly insisted that he has done nothing wrong and answered all questions about his dealings for "Mr B" truthfully. However, a somewhat different impression is given by the February 2004 letter Mills wrote to his accountant – leaked to an Italian newspaper two weeks ago – regarding the \$600,000 "gift" in 1999 which is now the subject of another Italian investigation into the testimony he gave at two Berlusconi trials, in 1997 and 1998, following the initial SFO investigation. "I told no lies but I turned some very tricky corners, to put it mildly," Mills wrote. He had kept "Mr B out of a great deal of trouble that I would have landed him in if I had said all I knew".

Prosecutions by the SFO for failing to comply with a Section 2 request for information are rare. Such a prosecution could have been legally difficult and might have handicapped the Italian investigation. And no doubt any evidence fell well below the standard required for a prosecution – especially perhaps of the husband of a Cabinet minister.

The almost 10-year history of the SFO's involvement with the Italian investigation into Mills and his role as Berlusconi's offshore "consigliere" began with the polite seizure in London of 15 files relating to the Italian magnate's Fininvest business empire. These were handed over in April 1996 after the SFO visited the offices of Edsaco, the company administrators who had taken over Mills' CMM Corporate

Services in 1994. Mills resigned in 1995.

The Mills offshore "archipelago", as the Italians call it, was designed to at the very least minimize tax for Berlusconi companies. But the investigative magistrates have also accused Berlusconi of using it to pay bribes and launder money.

A new area of investigation in 2003 was whether the SFO had been handed in 1996 all the relevant files requested by the Italians. In particular there was interest in the appearance from Switzerland in 1995 and subsequent transfer to Malta of files concerning Berlusconi, which were never seen by the SFO. These were said to contain "dynamite" information.

The files had come from a lawyer in Lugano ahead of attempts by the Italian investigators to obtain Swiss documents concerning Fininvest. Lugano was a focus for Fininvest finances. The files had not been kept at the Edsaco offices or at the usual archive storage location but at a depository operated by Moves. From there the files were later transferred to Malta where they disappeared.

Just who had ordered the movement of such sensitive Berlusconi files was a matter of dispute among all those questioned by the SFO in 2003. Also disputed was who had authorized and produced various documents relating to Berlusconi companies. A former senior CMM employee along with two ex-Edsaco executives who had taken over the CMM clients were interviewed by the SFO and gave at times different explanations for documents and events to those provided by each other and Mills.

These contradictions, along with Mills' concerns about the tax and criminal implications of the \$600,000

"gift", may help explain his decision to approach the Italian magistrates in late 2004. But by then it seems they believed they had sufficient evidence to prosecute both him and Berlusconi for perverting the course of justice. Mills vehemently denies being bribed to give false evidence.

The prosecutors say Mills could be indicted shortly. That's the bad news. The good news is that the Italian statute of limitations – which has bailed out Berlusconi before – could expunge any alleged crime next year.

**B**ERLUSCONI is not the only fan of Tony Blair with an appreciation of the attractions offered by offshore tax havens. Three Labour donors currently waiting to pick up their peerages in return for cheques supporting the Dear Leader and his favourite causes also have offshore fingerprints.

Dr Chai Patel, whose Priory Healthcare group was taken over last year, held his share stake through a trust company in Jersey – coincidentally the corporate successor to Edsaco. Patel received a reported £45m on the sale to

Dutch bankers ABN-Amro.

The Uganda-born Patel would qualify for non-domicile status and so could legally benefit from offshore discretionary trust arrangements. As a result, the Jersey trust could have received the £45m UK tax-free and Patel could have avoided capital gains tax at a probable maximum 10 percent on any of the proceeds he did not remit back to the UK.

Sir Gulam Noon has two settlements in Guernsey, which with an offshore company hold a controlling stake in his highly profitable Bombay Halwa food group. Indian-born Noon has "non-dom" status although, like Patel, is UK resident for most tax purposes.

The Guernsey trusts have received more than £200,000 in dividends since 2002. As Noon set up the trusts, any benefit he received via the settlements would be UK taxable. But this would not apply to non-UK resident family members. And there are substantial inheritance tax advantages – Noon is 70 this year – regarding the control and protection of assets from holding shares offshore. And if he left the UK, any dividends or proceeds of sale would not be taxable here.

Sir David Garrard's haven of choice was Liechtenstein when he floated the Minerva property group in 1996. His shares were then largely held through two family trusts administered in Vaduz by three local lawyers and a company in Jersey. These had been established before the rules on offshore trusts were changed to tax any benefits received by UK residents.

The family trusts were big sellers of Minerva shares last year when Garrard stepped down as chairman. One transaction alone was worth £37m. What if any UK tax was paid or payable on these share sales is unclear; but such trusts could have legally avoided even the maximum 10 percent gains tax probably payable should the trusts not have been made UK resident.

Nothing in the offshore arrangements made by Patel, Noon or Garrard is of course illegal; but it may just cause Chancellor Gordon Brown, a constant campaigner against offshore tax avoidance, to wonder about some of Labour's friends.

**L**AWYER Paul Baxendale-Walker is another offshore trust and tax expert. So much so that he is due to appear on BBC TV this week in a documentary entitled *No tax please, we're rich*.

Baxendale-Walker is also due to appear somewhat less publicly before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. This follows his role in the events which made 200 pensioners decidedly poorer when most of their pension fund was stolen by a Danish conman and his associates in a complex offshore transaction involving unpaid loans and worthless assets.

Bjorn Steidl is currently serving four and a half years for robbing the Balfour Group pension fund of more than £2.1m. Baxendale-Walker, who acted for Steidl and through whose client account the money was paid in 1994, was originally charged with him in 2001 by the SFO.

However, the case against the lawyer was



## THE DIRECTORS



DREDGE & RIGG

# Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

## ISA season special: New Star's black hole

Value of £5,000  
invested 5 years ago  
in...

£3,100

£7,000

...New Star unit  
trust UK Strategic  
Income\*

...its average  
competitor\*

\*Oh yes, and in an ISA your losses aren't  
even tax deductible

stopped in 2002 as an abuse of process after a high court judge decided in the civil case brought by the Balfon pension trustees that Baxendale-Walker had not acted dishonestly. Uniquely the civil claim was allowed to precede the criminal trial in a bid to compensate the Balfon victims.

Judge Wadsworth in the criminal trial clearly then felt it would be embarrassing to the more senior Mr Justice Etherton if a jury of lesser beings disagreed with his finding that Baxendale-Walker had been "guilty of very serious negligence that fell short of fraud". Such a clash of opinion would, he said, "only bring the law into disrepute"! The SFO case against Baxendale-Walker was stayed and he was acquitted.

However, the Law Society may be more interested in the findings in the civil case where Baxendale-Walker was one of nine defendants. That April 2002 judgment was banned from publication pending Steidl's appeal, which failed last November. The lawyer is expected to contest the disciplinary proceedings vigorously.

"I have come to the conclusion that I have to view the evidence of Mr Baxendale-Walker with considerable caution," declared Etherton. That evidence "left me with considerable doubt as to the extent to which (he) was giving honest evidence as to his actual recollection... Furthermore there were some particular incontrovertible matters which cast doubt on (his) honesty and hence his credibility as a witness."

In one of three instances identified by the judge, what Baxendale-Walker had testified under cross-examination was said to be "manifestly untrue". In another he had been "party to deception". In a third he had written a letter of reference to Barclays stating that a man he had never met or spoken to – and who did not exist under the name used by a Canadian con artist partner of Steidl – was "a person of integrity and standing".

But despite what the judge described as "a compelling argument that Mr Baxendale-Walker was dishonestly participating in and promoting the transaction in the knowledge that it would involve a breach of trust or dishonestly not caring whether it would or not", Etherton decided "on what I have found to be a difficult and finely balanced exercise" that the solicitor had not been "intentionally driving what he knew to be a dishonest... unlawful transaction".

Instead he found Baxendale-Walker responsible for "a remarkable and colossal", "lamentable", "breathtaking lack of professional judgement" which had allowed the lawyer – then only 30 and just started his own firm – to be manipulated by Steidl and others.

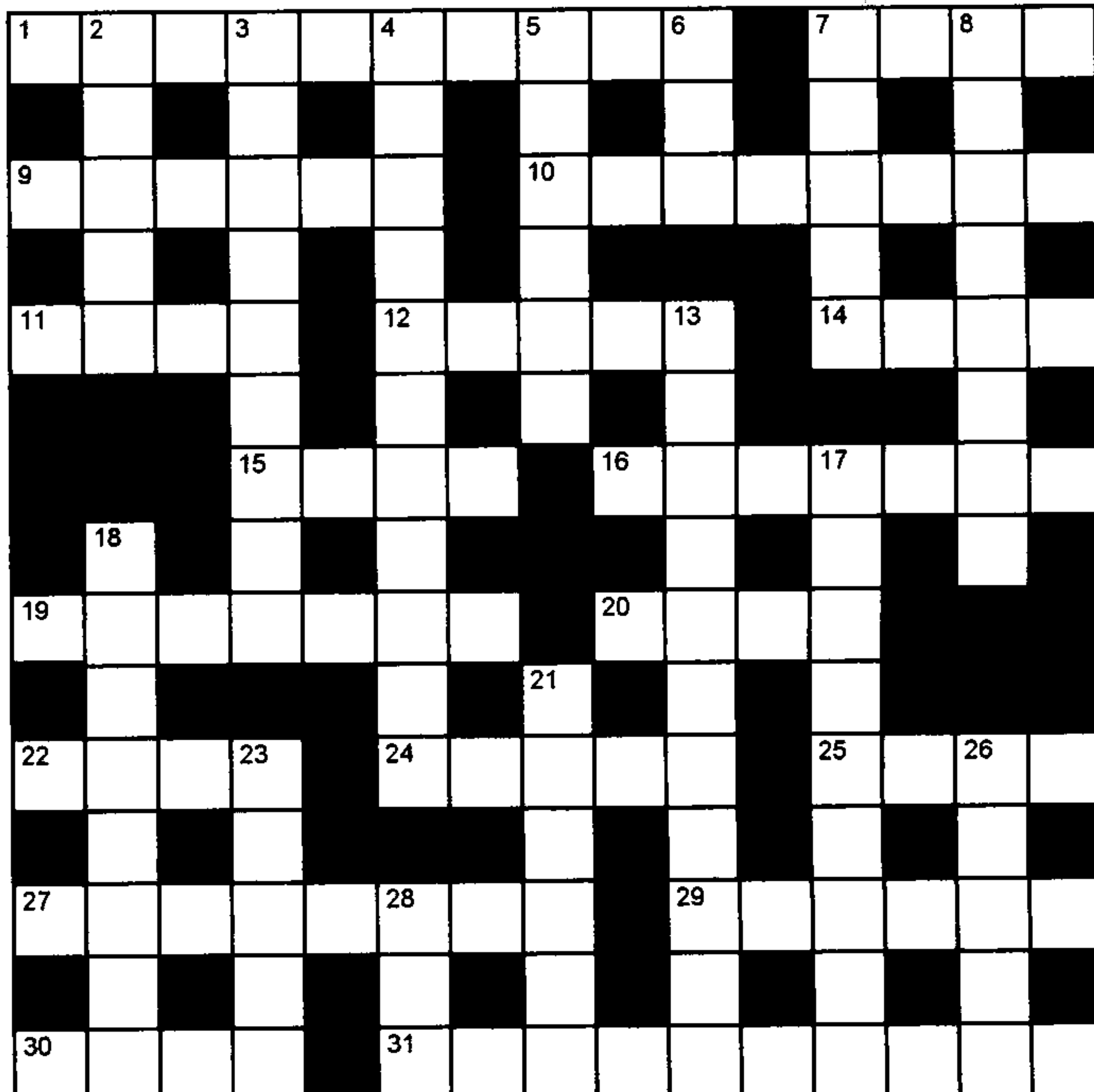
But because he had found the lawyer's honesty "a difficult and borderline question", the judge was in no doubt that it would be "unconscionable" for Baxendale-Walker to retain his £50,000 fee. "A competent and conscientious solicitor with the knowledge that Mr Baxendale-Walker had would have declined to act in the transaction. It was a gross error of professional judgment... to have done so".

'Slicker'

## EYE CROSSWORD 308 by Cyclops

£100 prize  
to first correct solution  
opened on  
10 March 2006

Entries to 'Crossword',  
Private Eye,  
6 Carlisle Street,  
London W1D 3BN  
or via email to  
crossword@private-eye.co.uk



### ACROSS

- 1/8 Eventual expulsion of binge drinker with disgusting, far-reaching effects? (10,8)  
7/30 "Yield to leader" blow (4,4)  
9 CIA hit abroad by exercises (3,3)  
10 Bumper pee almost thwarted by device for shifting piss from the cellar (4,4)  
11 Novelist who's 80% defective? (4)  
12 Capital made when car hits bollocks, left having dropped off (5)  
14/22 Poser who snorted: "Kelvin needs one to toss me off" (4,4)  
15/20 Uplifting access to drink for the street lager lout? (4,4)  
16 One only half wanking is easing up (7)  
19 Native American top grade soldier who's dropped, rejected, by House (7)  
20 See 15ac.  
22 See 14ac.  
24 Donald's model parliament? (5)  
25 Doubtful last 2/3 of an erection (4)  
27 China boobs at the start, getting intimate (5,3)  
29 Tabloid to sack slovenly female (6)  
30 See 7ac.  
31 Women, in an offensively sexual way, paw – son approaches timidly (10)

### DOWN

- 2 Flesh and blood male dominated by Brenda (5)  
3 Male athlete's trick for keeping his equipment safely in place (9)  
4 Stylish Kentish product? Worthless (11)  
5 Cyclops is right out of palm-grease and drink (6)  
6 See 28dn.  
7 Take a piss, old man, before Kay's Ukrainian dance (5)  
8 See 1ac.  
13 Substantial work to do for Blair & Co! (6,5)  
17 Engaging in intercourse or "bollocking" (7-2)  
18 It helps protect my pole – rude, oo-er, etc, missus finally inside (8)  
21 Scruples? Question undergrad's first example of public relief (6)  
23 Steel's second promise ... (5)  
26 ... to get place finally in shameless junket (5)  
28/6 Snap organ you're holding for the sailor-man (6)

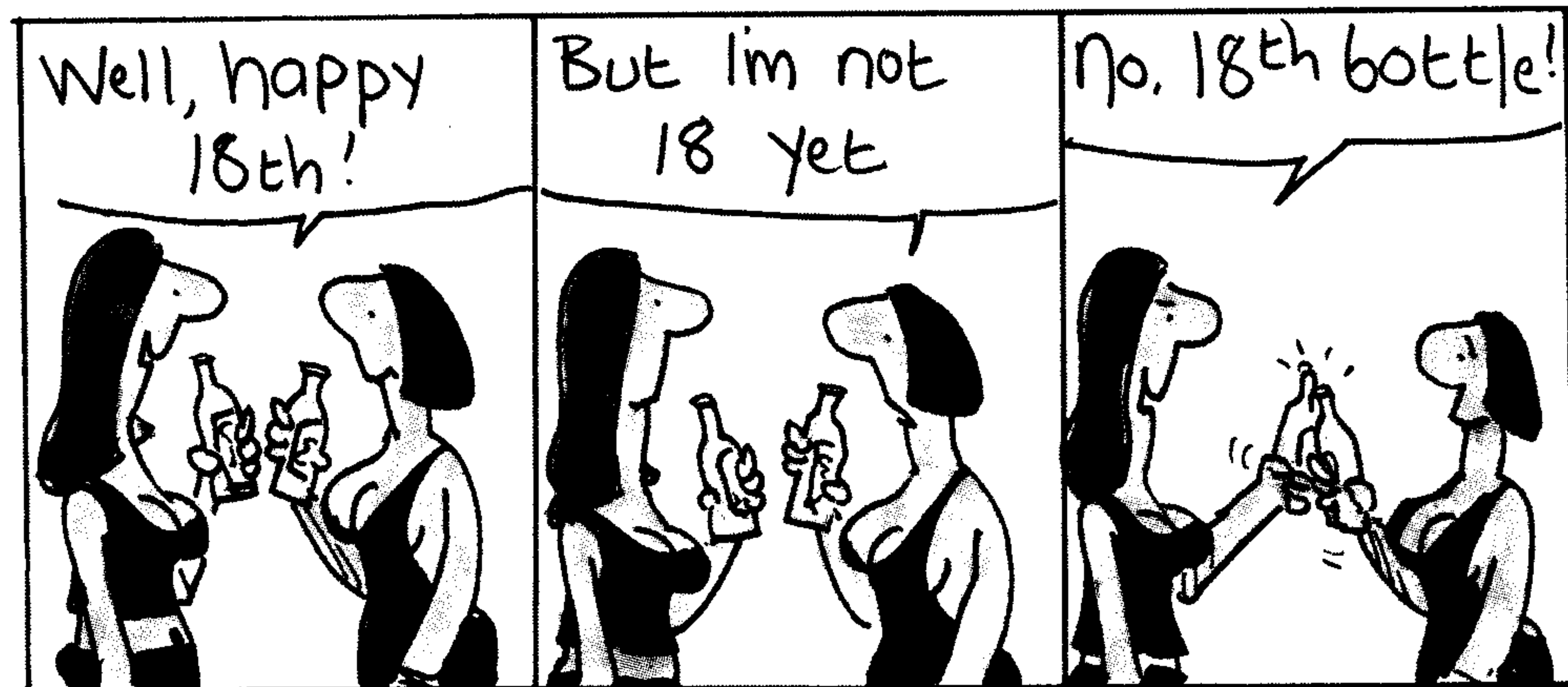
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ACROSS: 8 Get a life 9 Hooter 10 Biceps 11 Scrubber 12 Shit bricks 14/26 Did a runner 15 Cher 17 Panic 19 Nude 20 Knob 22 Cocksucker 24 Cop a feel 27 Jet ski 28 Catamite.

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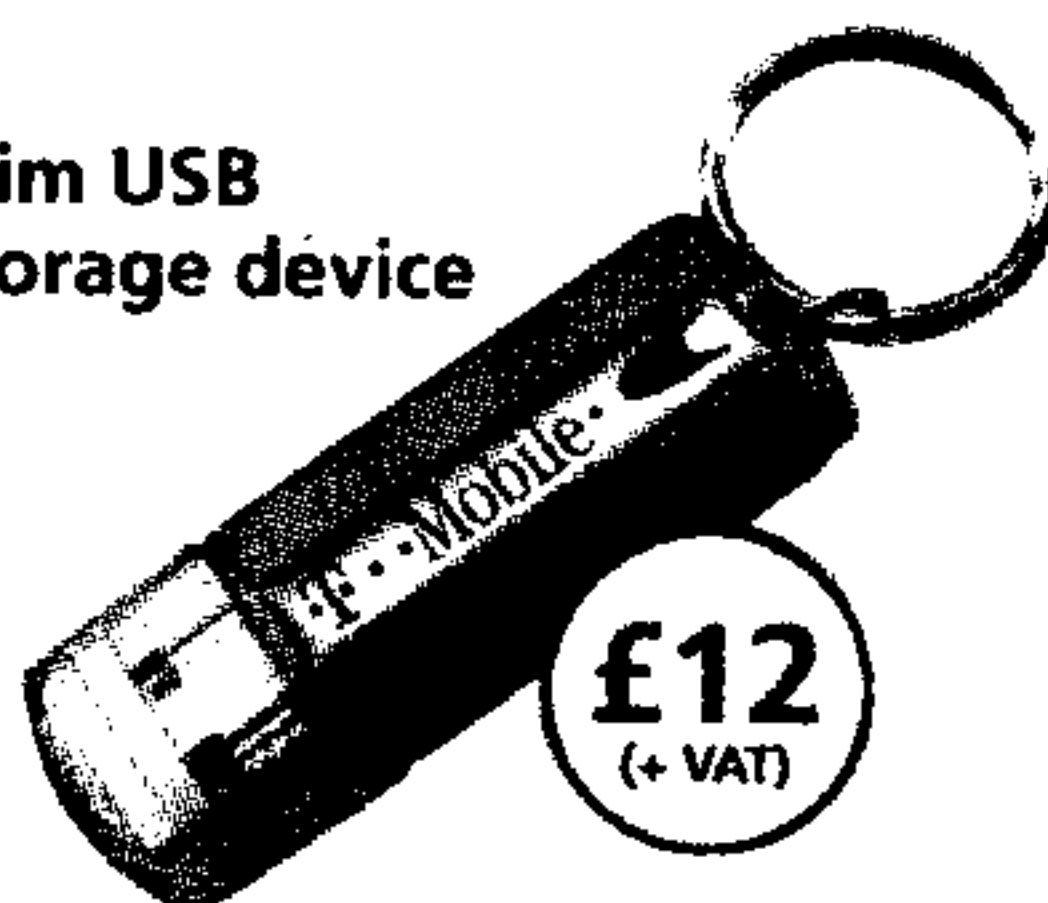
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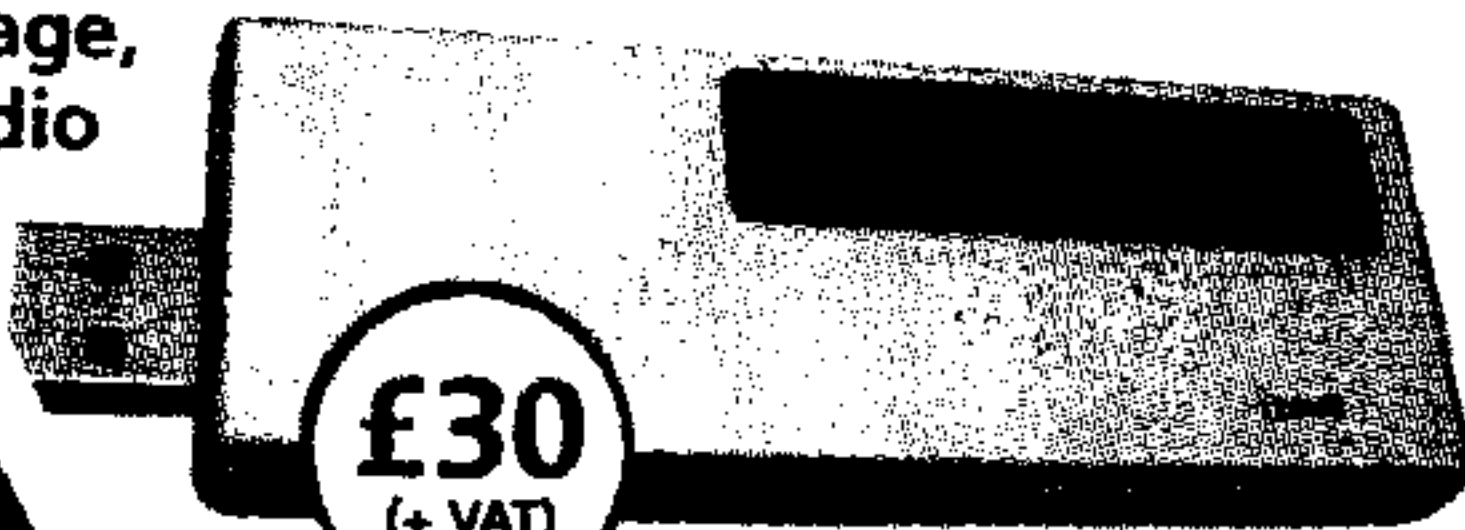
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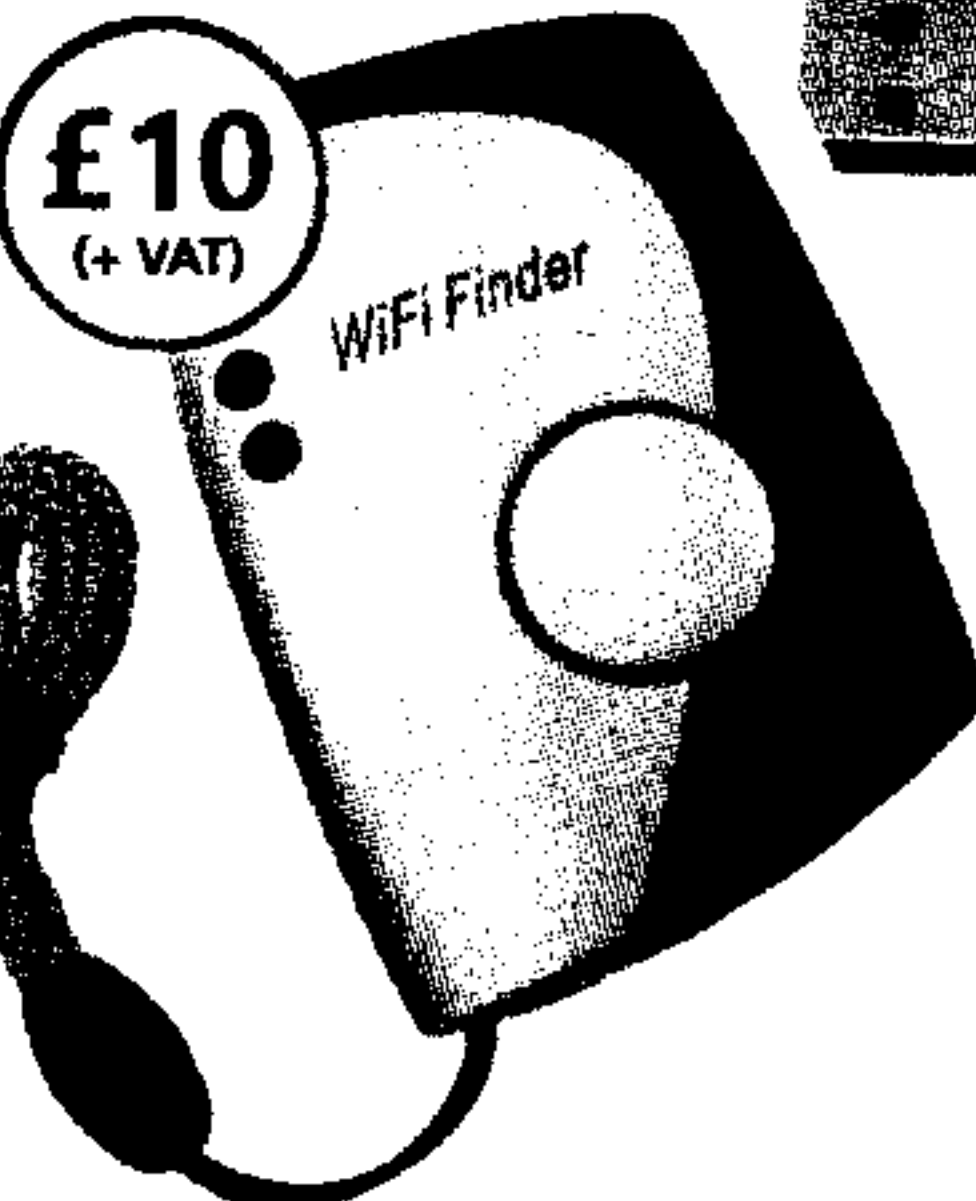
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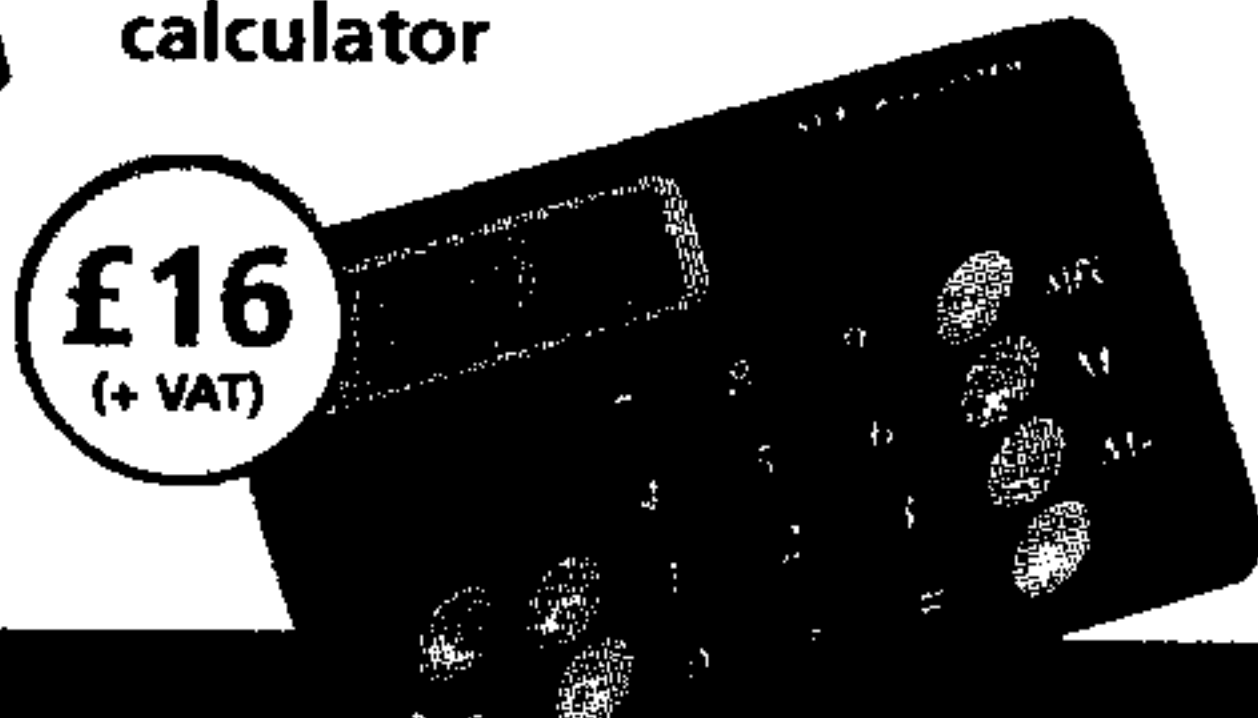
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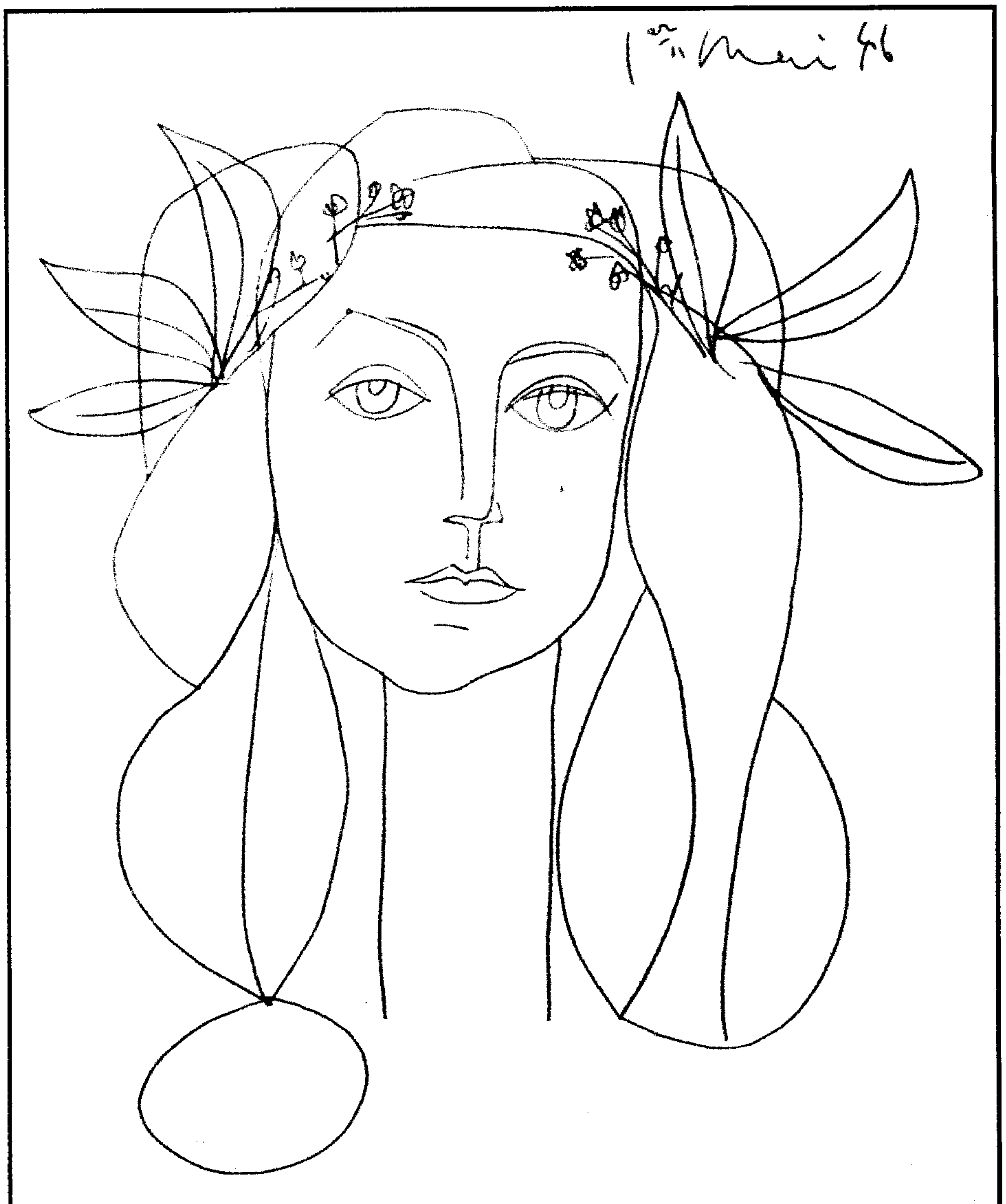
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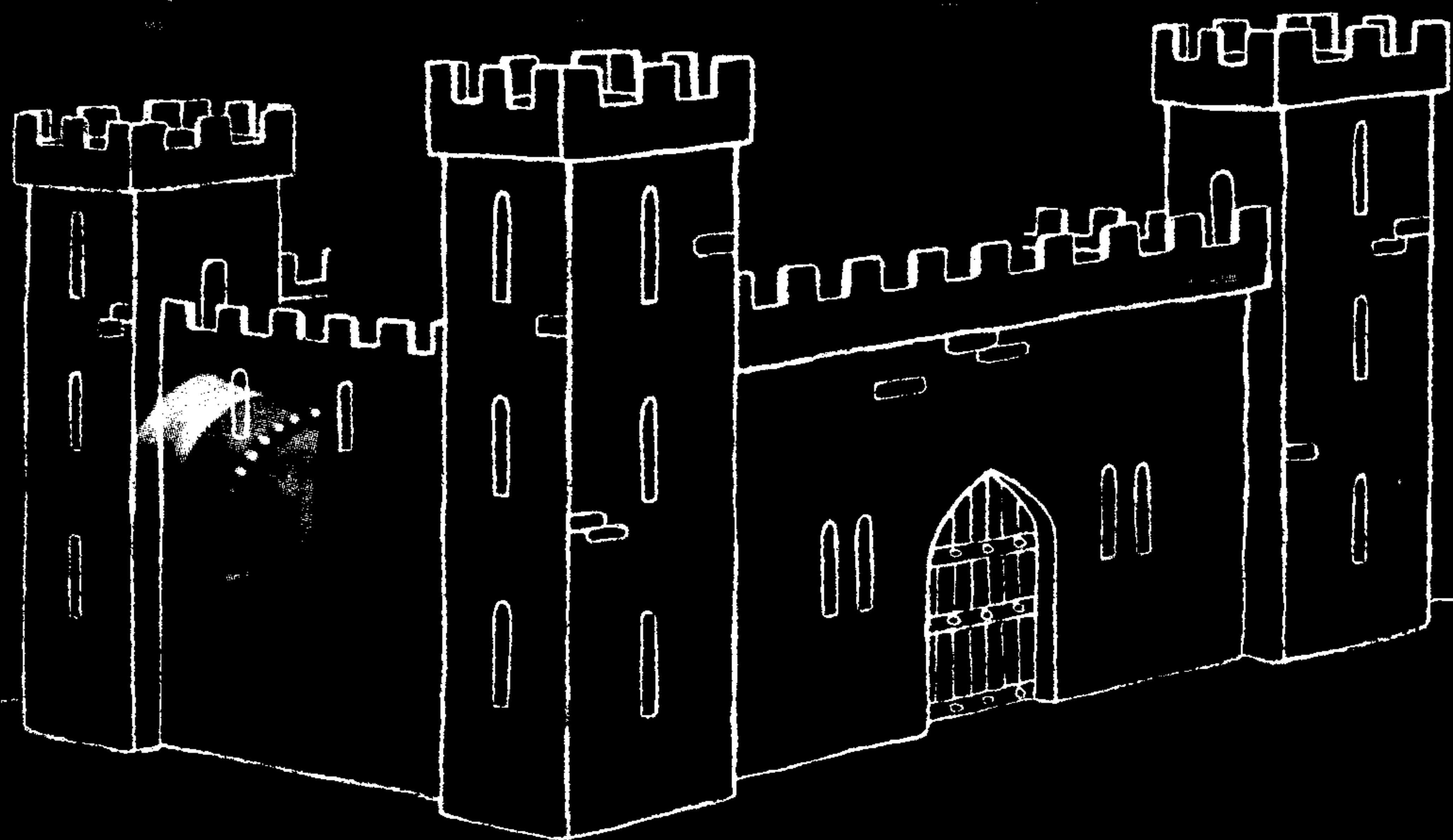
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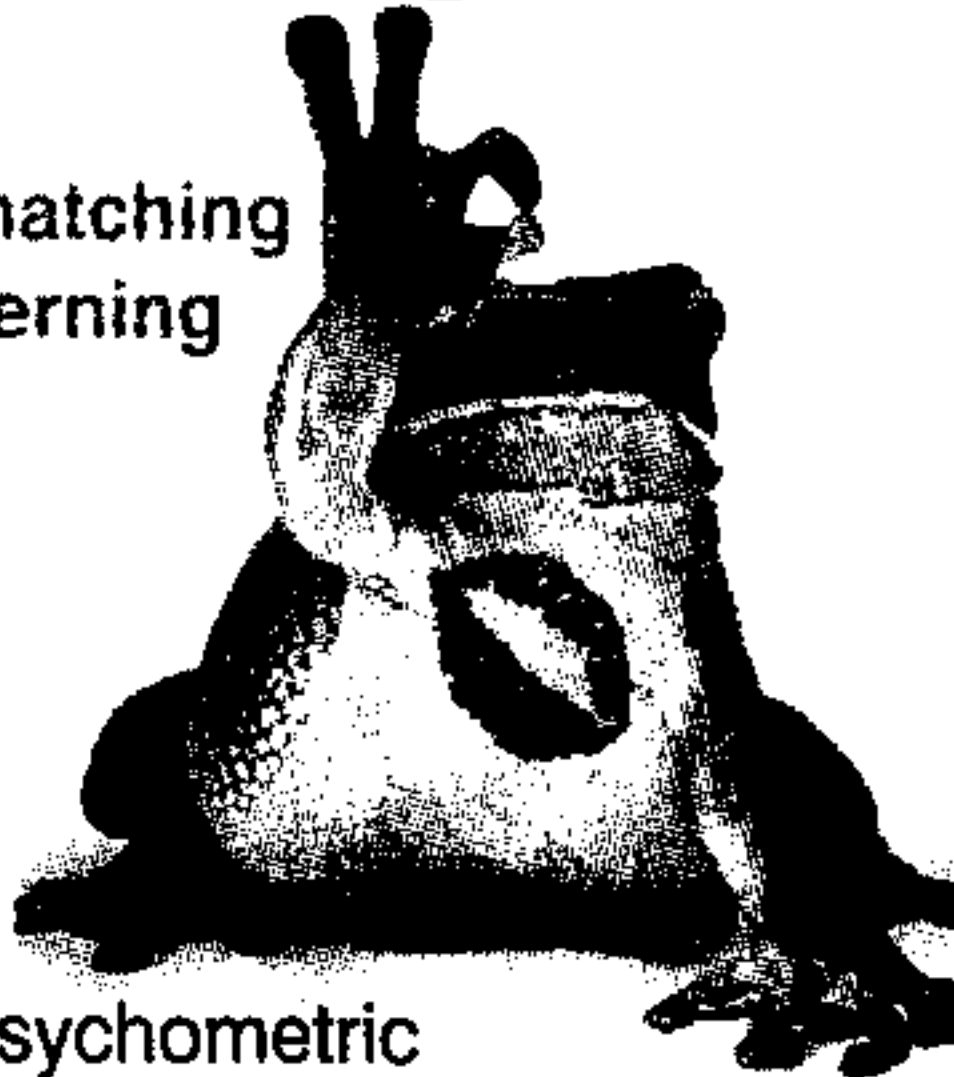
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